GEAR OF THE YEAR RW 23 Best Buys Of '22

RUNNER'S WORLD

GET FIT FAST

A SIMPLE PLAN TO BUILD STRENGTH, BOOST SPEED AND BEAT INJURY p42

BORN AGAIN

Chris McDougall On *Born To Run 2*

YOGA vs PILATES

WHAT'S BEST FOR RUNNERS?

13 AWESOME WINTER RACES

The Complete Guide To Nailing Your First Marathon p28

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2023

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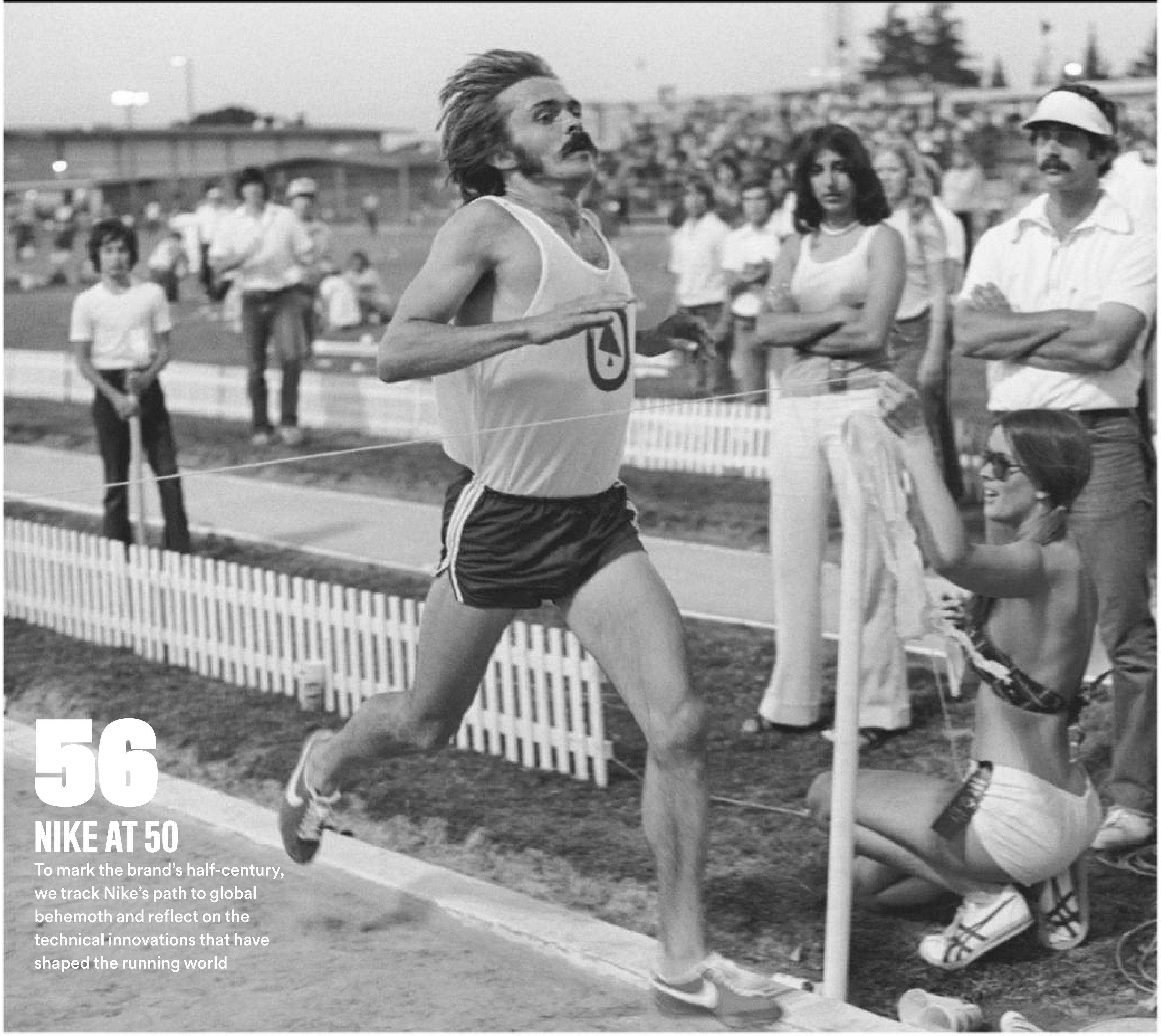

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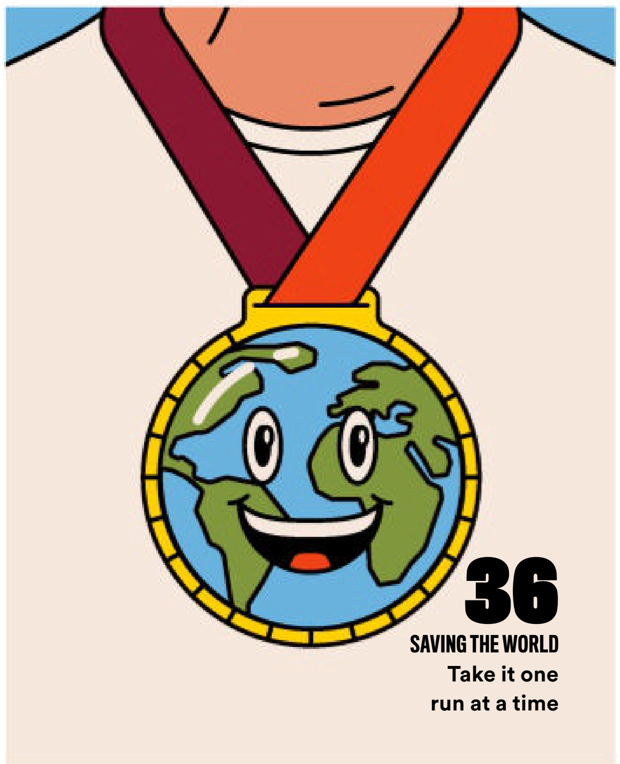

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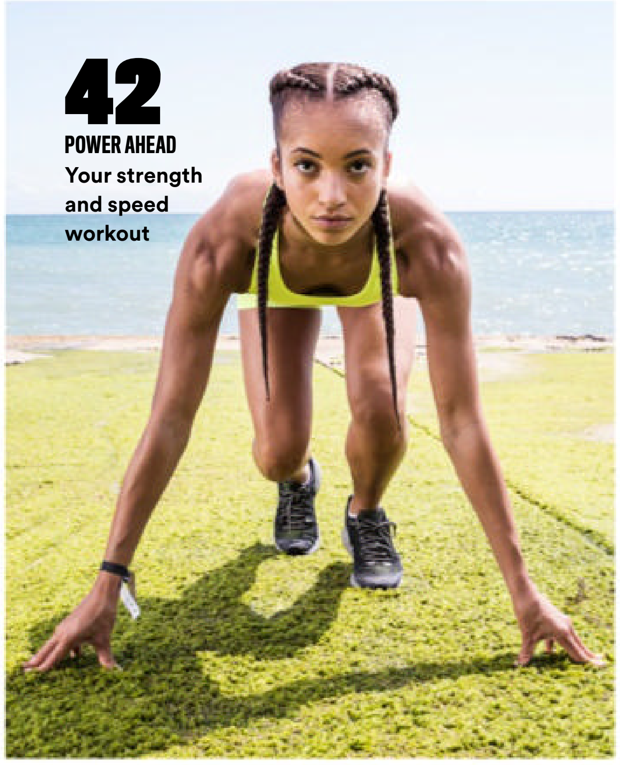

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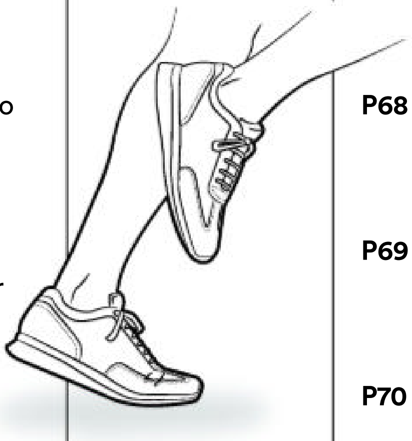

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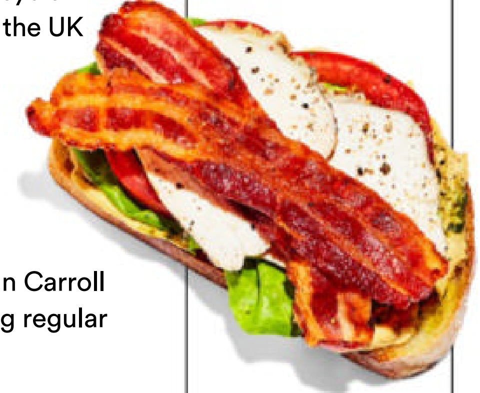

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WE'RE FIRST FOR NEW GEAR

For news and reviews on the latest shoes, tech, apparel and accessories, visit runnersworld.com/uk. Here's what's hot on the site right now

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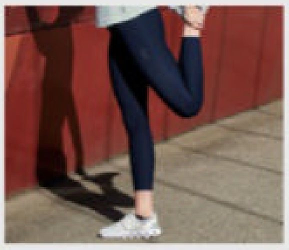

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GET PACKING

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Whether for an ultra or a run commute, here's our pick of the finest running backpacks.

RAASAY, ISLE OF SKYE

THE LOCATION
The island of Raasay sits off the eastern coast of the Isle of Skye. Measuring just 14 miles long by five miles wide, the island's breathtaking natural beauty and tranquillity makes it a paradise for runners, walkers, nature lovers and those who just want to escape.

THE RUN
The island is criss-crossed with woodland trails, dismantled railway lines, open moorland and coastal paths. Here, trail runner Seana Forbes follows a coastal trail with the dorsal-shaped summit of Dun Caan (the island's highest point at 444m) in the distance and the deserted township of Hallaig beneath. For more details and a 10.8-mile run route mapped by Forbes for Merrell's Trails of Europe project, visit merrell.com/UK/en_GB/trails-of-europe.

RUNNER
Seana Forbes

PHOTOGRAPHER
James Carnegie

▶

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EDITOR'S LETTER

IT'S FAIR TO SAY that *Born To Run*, Chris McDougall's first book, had a seismic impact on running when it was published in 2009. It was a captivating account of his encounters with the Tarahumara, an indigenous Mexican people, who seemed to have a genetic ability to run long distances. This was despite, or maybe because of, the fact that they did it in rudimentary, non-cushioned sandals, which kick-started the minimalist running trend and sent shoe brands scrabbling to produce light, stripped-down models in response. In this issue we talk to McDougall about *Born To Run 2* (page 50), a training guide that incorporates the lessons of his lifelong running journey, in Mexico and beyond. He talks about how running should ultimately be joyful and how it's more fulfilling, and truer to our prehistoric ancestors, to run in a group. It's an intriguing and inspiring message, and if his new book has anything like the impact of the predecessor, it should be hugely positive.

Elsewhere, there's all the advice you need if you're thinking of taking on your first marathon (page 28), simple moves to build your power (page 42) and advice on your running gait (page 66), as well as our annual Gear Awards to celebrate the stuff the *RW* team has enjoyed over past year. And in case you need any festive inspo, there are some delicious ideas about what to do with your leftover turkey on page 72.

ANDY DIXON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF @RW_ed_Andy

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DAMIAN HALL
The record-breaking ultrarunner, author, environmental campaigner and co-founder of The Green Runners addresses how our running can harm the planet – and how we can reduce our footprints in *We Can't Run Away From This* on **p36.**

LAUREN DEL TURCO
The writer, *Women's Health* fitness editor and certified personal trainer delves into the science and application of a smart training method that can boost your performance and build your resilience against injury in *Power Moves* on **p42.**

WARM-UPS

The PS YOU NEED to GET UP to SPEED

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Let the draft in

Get behind a new study to cut minutes from your marathon time

DRAFTING REACHED the public consciousness in 2019 when it helped Eliud Kipchoge to run his historic sub-2:00 marathon. The Kenyan ran behind a 'flying V' of runners to reduce his air resistance on that great day in Vienna. But is drafting really that important? Yes, says a new study by Brazilian researchers*. They found that a runner hurtling along at two-hour marathon pace – 4:34 per mile – could save between three minutes, 42 seconds and five minutes, 29 seconds. Four- and five-hour marathoners would get a similar benefit – the difference in air resistance is less at slower speeds, but those runners would be on the course for longer, which evens out the advantage.

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK. *SOURCE: *JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSIOLOGY*

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Marathon placements

What are you looking for in your ideal marathon? A list has been assembled by hotelfollower.com using criteria including average temperature, entry fee, price of beer, air pollution and accommodation cost. There are some surprising results – the six Marathon Majors don't feature – but it might be worth a look when you're wondering where to run your next 26.2. Here's the top 10:

	Marathon name	Country
1	Kosice Peace Marathon	Slovakia
2	Windermere Marathon	UK
3	Valencia Marathon	Spain
4	San Sebastián Marathon	Spain
5	Ljubljana Marathon	Slovenia
6	Loch Ness Marathon	UK
7	Madrid Marathon	Spain
8	Vienna Marathon	Austria
9	Marrakech Marathon	Morocco
10	Frankfurt Marathon	Germany

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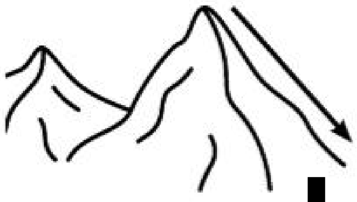
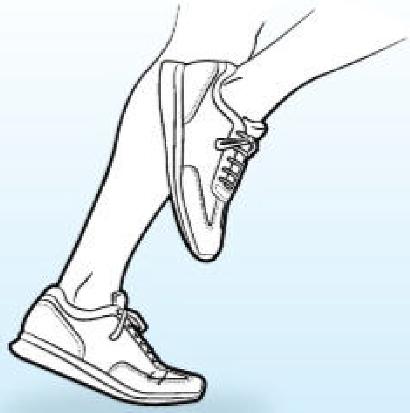


Get down

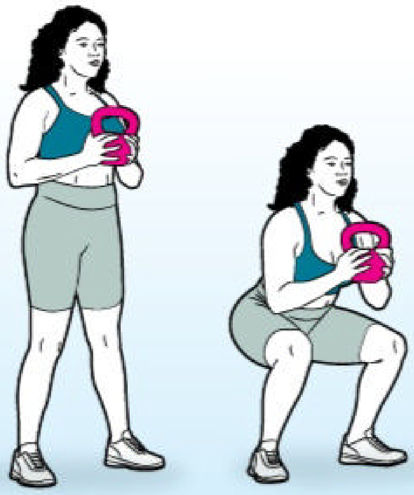
Four ways to become a smoother, faster downhill runner

WE'LL LET YOU IN ON A SECRET: endurance limitations in running are often fatigue-resistance limitations – an inability to put out enough power after a certain distance or time. These fatigue-resistance metrics aren't tied to aerobic endurance, but to mechanical fatigue. And the number one reason for mechanical fatigue? Running downhill. Physiologists, biomechanists and coaches have studied the issue and their findings can be summarised in these four steps:



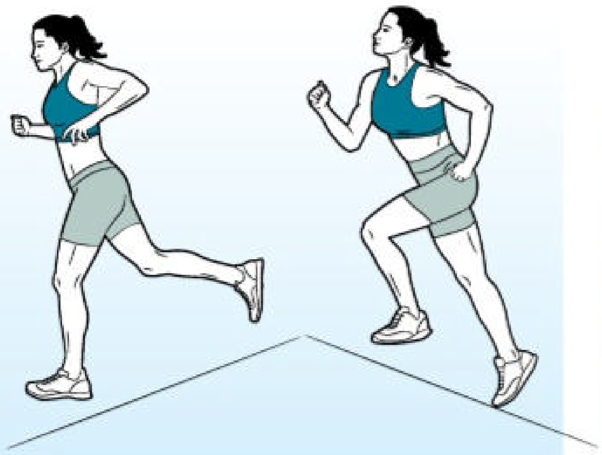
01/ PRACTISE GOOD FORM

Aim for the quickest feet you can. This limits eccentric contractions and allows for less precise foot placement. If you don't use quick feet, each step must be perfectly judged.



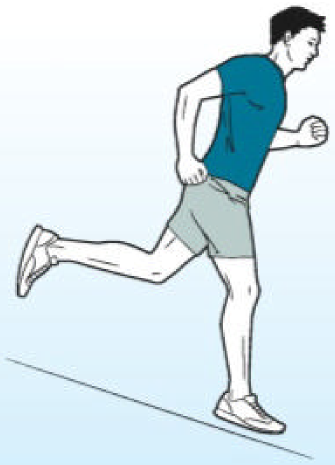
02/ DO SOME STRENGTH TRAINING

Eccentric muscle contractions by strength training can lead to fast gains. Try a twice-weekly set of Bulgarian split squats, reverse lunges, single-leg deadlifts and goblet squats.



03/ PUSH HARDER ON THE DOWNS

From a heart-rate perspective, you can run a little harder on downhills without going into the red. This allows for physiological and mechanical improvements with less effort.



04/ SEEK OUT THE STEEP STUFF

Once every three weeks, find a slope that is as steep or steeper than any you'll encounter on race day and do some downhill reps at around your half-marathon pace.

27&29

The optimal age for men and women, respectively, to run their fastest marathon.

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INTRODUCING

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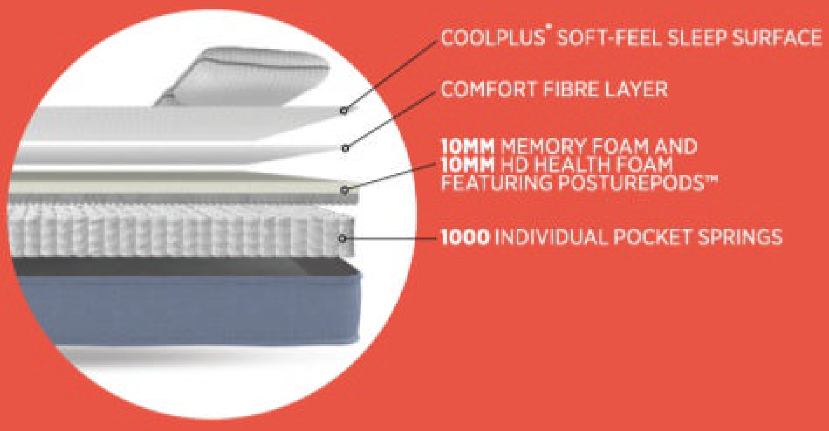
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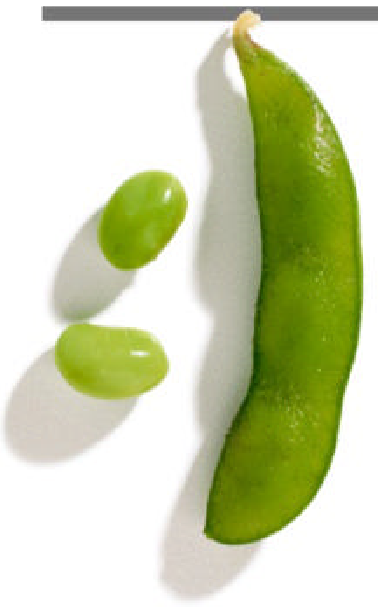
Junk miles

It's official: you can't outrun a bad diet

DOES REGULAR RUNNING give you the green light to eat like Homer Simpson? Unfortunately not, according to a major new study*. The researchers concluded that high levels of physical activity do not counteract the detrimental effects of a poor diet. Equally, dining on nothing but superfoods was also found to be insufficient to keep you at your healthiest – good food choices need to be paired with moderate exercise to be fully effective. An earlier study, published in *The Journal Of Physiology*, had suggested it might be possible to outrun a bad diet. It found 'vigorous-intensity exercise counteracted most of the effects of short-term overfeeding and under-activity'. However, that study was small and did not include a follow-up. The conclusion of the latest research, therefore, seems to be the most reliable: 'Exercise does not fully compensate for a poor diet; we recommend both an active lifestyle and a healthy diet.'

IT'S A SIGN! Run from temptation



Plants vs whey

Plant-based protein may be as effective as whey, according to a new study*. It found that supplementing with either a plant-based protein or whey protein (derived from milk) made no significant difference to variables such as strength, power and endurance performance in highly trained futsal players tested over eight weeks. (Futsal is a football-based game played on a hard pitch with a smaller, heavier ball.) This suggests that plant-based alternatives contain the same energy-creating properties as whey protein. They are also kinder to the planet.

4 things you didn't know about caffeine

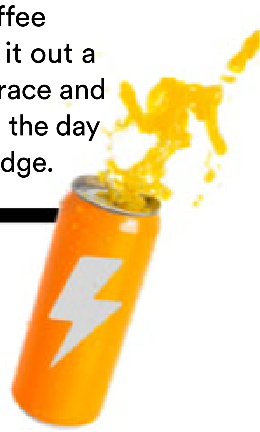
01 Caffeine helps you to train better when you're jet-lagged.

02 A 10-second caffeine mouth rinse can boost athletic performance. You can try this with coffee or a caffeinated sports drink*. See *Swish list*, below, for more.

03 Contraceptive pills can enhance the effect of coffee, as they block an enzyme that helps to metabolise caffeine.

04 If you drink coffee every day, cutting it out a few days before a race and re-introducing it on the day won't give you an edge.

Swish list



Rinsing your mouth with a sports drink, rather than swallowing it, sends a signal to your brain that carbs are being provided. It's a technique that might be worth trying late in your next marathon. Here's why: it can be hard to take on fuel in the final miles of a 26.2 and any carbs you consume at, say, mile 24, may not make it to your leg muscles in time for you to use them. A quick mouth rinse tricks your brain into thinking energy is available, without the need for you to swallow the drink.

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES, DAN MATTHEWS, STUDIO 33/KAT PISIOLEK.
*SOURCES: *BRITISH JOURNAL OF SPORTS MEDICINE; FRONTIERS IN NUTRITION; AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SPORTS MEDICINE*

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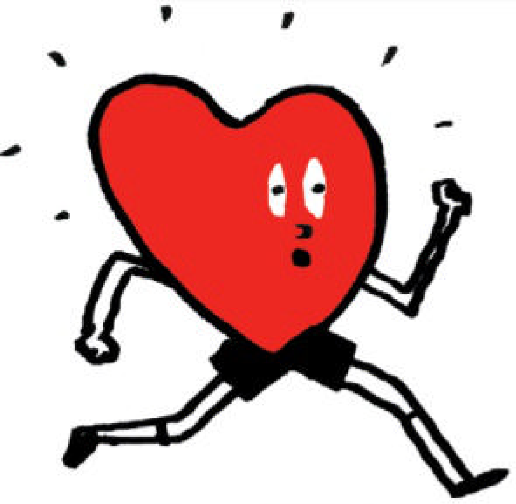

Healthy deposit

Coronary artery calcium (CAC) deposits are linked to heart attacks and strokes – but not in lifelong exercisers, says a new study. Exercise has previously been associated with CAC deposits, but new research published in the *British Journal Of Sports Medicine* made a distinction between different types of deposit. The hardened deposits (the type found in lifelong exercisers) are not likely to break off and cause heart damage; whereas the soft cholesterol deposits are. This led them to conclude that, in those who regularly exercise, CAC 'does not carry a correspondingly higher risk of incident CVD [cardiovascular disease] event'.

Fitness trackers help exercisers log up to an extra 40 minutes of exercise a day.*

Pollution decreases the benefits of a run

Air miles

Can running in heavily polluted areas negate some of its benefits?

RUNNING HAS MYRIAD benefits for body and mind. But with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting that 99% of the global population now breathes air that exceeds its air-quality limits, some of these benefits might be nullified. That's according to two UK studies* which found that people who ran vigorously tended to have large brain volumes and lower dementia risk than their sedentary peers. But if people worked out in areas with moderate levels of air pollution, the expected brain improvements were almost entirely negated. So, what can you do? Here are five practical ideas:

- **Beware indoors**
Evidence suggests pollution levels indoors are about the same as outside.
- **Step to the side**
Pollution levels are localised, so simply running on the 'house side' of the pavement can make a difference.
- **Run early**
Set your alarm, pollution levels are lower in the morning.
- **Plot a better route**
There are various apps – eg, Tenzing Clean Air Tracker (London), Plume Labs (global) – that you can use. But lots of it is common sense: favour parks, quiet roads, canals and paths.
- **Keep running!**
Exercise still has multiple benefits, so don't take these findings as a reason not to run. Just, where possible, try to run in less polluted areas.

Excess granted

There's an enduring belief that doing too much of your favourite activity – say, running – can shorten rather than lengthen your lifespan. But a new study* suggests the 'excessive exercise' hypothesis has got it wrong. The researchers performed a 30-year follow-up of more than 100,000 health professionals. Those who did four times the recommend amount of 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week (the equivalent of running six hours at any pace) had a 21-23% lower risk of mortality.

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES, STUDIO 33. ILLUSTRATION: HARRY MALT AT DEBUT ART.
*SOURCES: *THE LANCET*; *NEUROLOGY*; *MEDICINE & SCIENCE IN SPORTS & EXERCISE*; *CIRCULATION*

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Blistery lesson

We tend to attribute blisters to poor-fitting shoes or socks. But there's often another culprit: inefficient running form. 'When you land with your foot out in front of you, it causes sheering forces on the foot against the shoe,' says physiotherapist and ultrarunner Joe Uhan (uhanperformance.com). The key, he says, is to try to land 'with a vertical shin'. It can be tricky to achieve this, particularly when running downhill, but Uhan has a couple of useful cues.

Posture: 'Think about downhill skiing, where you're almost in a semi-squat position. It places your body in a forward orientation without making you feel like you're going to fall forward.'

Leg action: 'Imagine you're running through four inches of snow. That helps to create a more circular, almost piston-like leg action, which will encourage landing with a vertical shin.'

The difference in impact forces between running on grass and on concrete*. Conclusion: harder surfaces may not cause more impact-related injuries.

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES. ILLUSTRATION: HARVEY SYMONS. *SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

It all adds up

For pain-free knees, you need to strengthen your hip abductors and adductors

TRADITIONALLY, runners with knee pain have been encouraged to strengthen their hip abductors. These are exercises, such as clamshells and crab walks, that move your leg away from the body's midline. While there's plenty of evidence to back up the efficacy of these exercises in helping with ailments such as runner's knee and ITB syndrome, don't ignore your adductors. These are the muscles that move your leg towards the body's midline, and a new study suggests they need to be given some attention, too. For the best results, do both (see exercises below).

ABDUCTORS

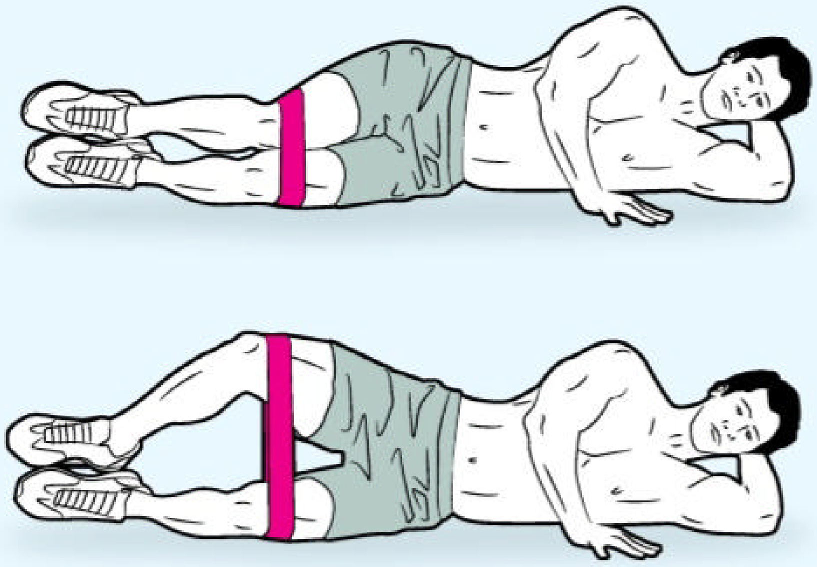
CLAMSHELL

01/ Place a resistance band around your legs, just above your knees.

02/ Lie on one side with your knees at a 45-degree angle, your legs and hips stacked.

03/ Keep your feet in contact with one another as you raise your upper knee as high as you can, without moving your hips or pelvis.

04/ Pause at the top for a few seconds before returning your top knee to the starting position. Do 20 reps on each side.



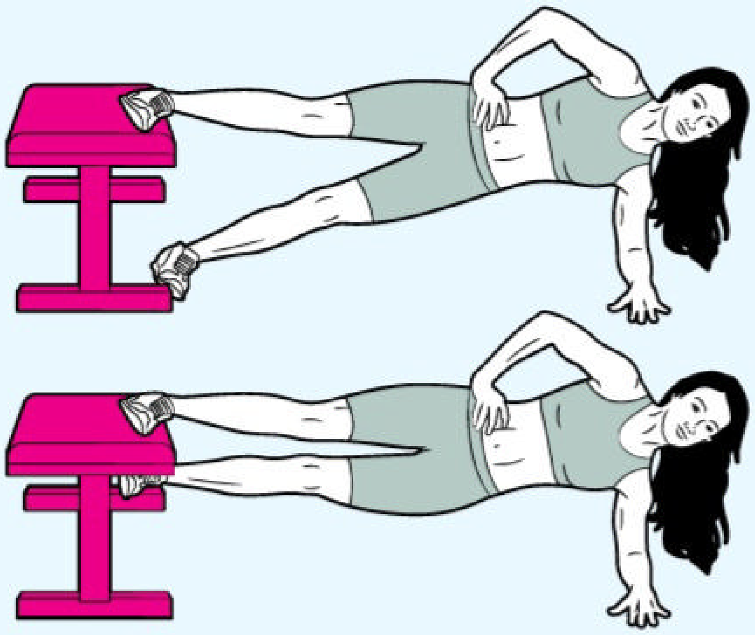
ADDUCTORS

COPENHAGEN PLANK

01/ In a side plank position, place your top leg on a bench and your bottom leg under the bench.

02/ Raise your hips up until your body is in a straight line. Keep your lower leg off the floor.

03/ Hold for 10 to 30 secs. Do three reps on each side. (Reduce the difficulty by keeping the foot of your lower leg on the floor.)



TRASH-FREE TRAILS p20 + **COUNTRY RUN** p24

HUMAN RACE

NEWS, VIEWS, TRENDS *and* ORDINARY RUNNERS *doing* EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

GOING THE DISTANCE

Andrea Mason's Sea to Summit challenges make Ironman triathlons look like walks in the park

> ‘I tell myself that if I quit, I’ll only have to come back and do it again’

Left: Andrea Mason finished her 2022 challenge by climbing Ben Nevis; (this page, top to bottom): day one, in Wales; and day two, Lake Windermere

‘I’M ALWAYS GETTING to a certain point, thinking I’m really fit, and then getting hit with something,’ says Andrea Mason. Before the 41-year-old IT consultant from Blackpool began her latest extreme challenge – to swim the three longest lakes and run up the three highest mountains in Wales, England and Scotland, cycling between the six destinations – it was long Covid. After catching the illness in October 2020, she suffered after-effects for over a year, including myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle), which could make her heart beat at 190bpm while she sat on the sofa.

And before the first of what is now four huge triathlons – swimming the Channel, cycling across France and climbing Mont Blanc in 2019 – she fell off her bike and broke her arm, then did the same again just as it was almost healed. But most of her setbacks have been gynaecological, and those are the reason for her epic challenges. Mason has been raising awareness and funding for her charity, Lady Talk Matters, which provides sanitary products to those in need and aims to amplify the conversation around reproductive health.

As a teenager, she was a swimmer and club runner, but her progress faltered once she began experiencing unusual pain from the first time she had her period. ‘I was always sick, always in a lot of pain,’ she says. ‘My mum often took me to A&E because she knew it wasn’t normal, but was just told, “She’s exaggerating, go home and give her a hot water bottle and some paracetamol.” I started to believe that I was overtraining, as I was so drained and fatigued all the time. It wasn’t until I was 22 that I was finally diagnosed with endometriosis.’

Endometriosis is a long-term condition where womb tissue grows elsewhere on the reproductive organs. Around the world, it affects one in 10 women of reproductive age.

‘There is still very much a taboo surrounding menstruation. In a lot of co-educational schools, boys are still removed from the class when you start talking about periods. When you do that, you’re saying to the girls, “This is something private that you should almost be ashamed about,” and you’re saying to the boys, “You don’t need to know or care about this.” That thought process stays with us as adults.’

Endometriosis was by no means the end of Mason’s health problems. She was later diagnosed with cervical cancer and had a hysterectomy in 2017.

Perhaps her extensive experience with pain and discomfort made her better suited than many to undertake such gruelling challenges. Under the umbrella title ‘Sea to Summit Extreme’, she swam 38km around Lake Annecy in eastern France, cycled the 330km Tour du Mont Blanc and ran the 170km Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc as another giant triathlon in 2020. A year later, in South Africa, she swam 35km across False Bay, rode 360km to Swartberg and climbed the 2,325m Seweweekspoort Peak. But the UK challenge in July 2022 was the hardest.

She started with a swim across Lake Bala in Wales, cycled to and ran up Snowdon, rode to Lake Windermere for the next swim, cycled to and ran up Scafell Pike, cycled to Scotland’s Loch Awe, where she swam again and, finally, cycled to Ben Nevis to finish with a run to the peak. That’s a total of 66km swimming, 812km cycling and 42km mountain running in four days, seven hours and 58 minutes – she set four records for fastest known times. (Former Royal Marines commando Frankie Tinsley beat her to the idea of uniting Britain’s longest lakes and highest peaks with his own 16-day triathlon in August 2021, but his format was different, as he ran between each lake and mountain, plus his cycle began at Land’s End and finished at John o’Groats.)

Mason enjoyed some beautiful moments, such as sunrise on a deserted Scafell, but with only five hours’ rest each night, between midnight and 5am, there wasn’t much time for contemplation. ‘With other challenges I’ve done, once the swim was over, it was over. This time I had to do each element three times, and everything got progressively longer and harder,’ she explains. ‘I was knackered from the first cycle – into a headwind during horrendous weather in Wales – and there was so much still to go.’

So she was surprised to hear from others that she had made it look easy. ‘I’m a film-maker’s nightmare because there’s no visible drama. I think it’s my coping strategy, to be overtly positive the whole time, because the minute I start telling somebody what’s in my head, it’ll become real and take me into a low that I don’t want to be in. I also tell myself that if I quit, I’ll only have to come back and do it again.’

Not surprisingly, there are more challenges in the works. The grand goal is to complete a Sea to Summit challenge on every continent; Asia is next. Then, finally, a rest. ‘I’ve promised my husband that once I’ve done every continent, I’ll take up chess.’

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seatosummitextreme.com; ladytalkmatters.org

WORDS: DAVID SMYTH. PHOTOGRAPHY: OLLY BOWMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

TRASH TALK

Dom Ferris from Trash Free Trails on what we can do to care for our favourite running routes

→ **DOM FERRIS** does not like the term 'litter'. He finds it too emotionally loaded and finger-wagging. At Trash Free Trails (TFT), the organisation Ferris set up in 2017 to 'protect our trails and the wild places they take us to', they prefer the term 'single-use pollution'.

And it's not just the language of littering that Ferris and his colleagues want to redefine. To him, single-use plastic is the symptom of an underlying problem: disconnection from the environment. If that sounds a little wishy-washy to you, consider this: can you imagine dropping a piece of single-use plastic on your favourite running trail? Of course not. Doing so would be, as Ferris puts it, 'akin to self-harm – that's how connected we feel to these places. So it naturally follows that anyone who doesn't feel emotional distress in littering must be disconnected from that place.'

But how do you reconnect people with their environment? TFT wants to 'reconnect people with nature through purposeful adventure'. If the thought of litter-picking doesn't set your heart aflutter, perhaps it's time to look at the activity through a different lens.

'Rather than saying, "Pick litter up because you have to," we're saying, "Having a positive impact on these places is uplifting,"' he says. Ferris has a history of success, having worked at Surfers Against Sewage for a decade and leading its hugely successful Beach Cleans initiative. 'Beach Cleans went so well because in a world of chaos, where environmental degradation can feel overwhelming, going out to your beach and removing plastic pollution offers a simple way to make a positive difference.'

TFT's Trail Cleans follow a similar format. Ferris describes them as 'the simple act of removing single-use pollution from the places we love, one bag at a time'. Trail Cleans can be done at any time, as an individual or as a group, with TFT encouraging people to report what they collect via its social media channels (@trashfreetrails).

Not that Ferris believes single-use pollution is the sole responsibility of consumers. Companies that sell their products in plastic bottles have a role to play. 'We're trying to create a sense of purposeful, shared responsibility.'

The three most recorded branded items on TFT's Trail Cleans are all plastic bottles from energy drink companies. And the items that cause most offence when dropped are: 1) bagged dog poo, 2) plastic bottles and 3) gel sachets/gel ends.

About this last item – TFT wants to work with gel companies to create a gel-top capture system, as it can be tricky not to litter the top of the gel when you're in the heat of a race.

And a quick word concerning that banana skin or orange peel you drop 'because it's biodegradable'. Ferris asks, 'Is it native? And how would it make you feel seeing, say, a rotten banana peel on the ground?' In other words, it's probably best to just put it back in your bag.

TFT is a small organisation with big aims – but its success depends on all of us. 'Ultimately, we want the upkeep of our trails to be a self-sustaining, day-to-day activity,' says Ferris. 'After all, we are here for the trails; without them, off-road running, cycling and walking wouldn't be possible. And we want to show that contributing to them in a positive way feels good.'

@trashfreetrails
trashfreetrails.org

BAG IT UP
Ferris and the team at TFT have made it their goal to reduce plastic on trails by 75% by 2025

TRASH FREE TRAILS

WORDS: RICK PEARSON; BEN HOBSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM DUGON; JAMES POOLE

In Other Words

BY JOHN CARROLL

RUNNING CAN BE HARD, BUT NOT RUNNING CAN BE HARDER

It's been estimated that more than seven million people in the UK turned to running during the Covid lockdowns*. I went the other way: I was already a runner, but I headed out far less often and never covered more than six miles. The result is that I am nowhere near as accomplished a runner as I was before 23 March 2020, when the first lockdown was put in place. (I'm using the word 'accomplished' quite loosely and, now that I think of it, I'm using the word 'loosely' with even less fidelity to its meaning.)

I've been able to ignore the depressing truth about my running because I generally go out alone, so I have no one listening to my tortured breathing and asking if it's time for me to lie down and, perhaps, not get up. However, my two brothers were kind enough to remind me of my lack of fitness when they visited me in London recently. We went for a short run, only three miles, but I couldn't match their pace for more than the first two and so informed them they'd have to slow down. I did this by stopping, catching my breath and, some indeterminate time later, calling out a wheezy 'Hey! Lads!' I think I waved, too, in the manner of a drowning man going down for the third time.

The following day we played squash and they both beat me easily – they hit harder, they were quicker to react and neither fell over, which I did. Twice. At 54, I felt old, slow and vulnerable. They are younger than I am, but that fact offered no solace. The last time we ran together, only a few years ago, I had no trouble keeping up with them. They are both faster than me over any distance now.

Running was a habit back then (back then! How far away those carefree pre-Covid days feel). I often ran to or from the office, or at lunchtime. It was structured and it was easy to fit in. Also, as a full-time member of staff on *Runner's World*, there was always an event to train for, so I was generally only a step or two away from being able to run a half marathon in relative comfort. Now I'm freelance and do all my work from home. I'm not surrounded by runners, as I was in the office, and there is less incentive to pull on my shoes and just go. You might think the freedom of working from home would have made it easier to slot in a run, but I have not found that at all. So when my brothers arrived from Dublin, I was forced to admit to myself (and them) that I have not been putting in the work. It has been seductively easy to slow down and run less. When I do parkrun these days, I never bother to look at my emailed time. And I don't wear a running watch any more.

INSPIRING WORDS

When you're tiring on a long run, just make a deal with yourself that you'll run to the next tree and then stop. This works best in a densely packed forest.

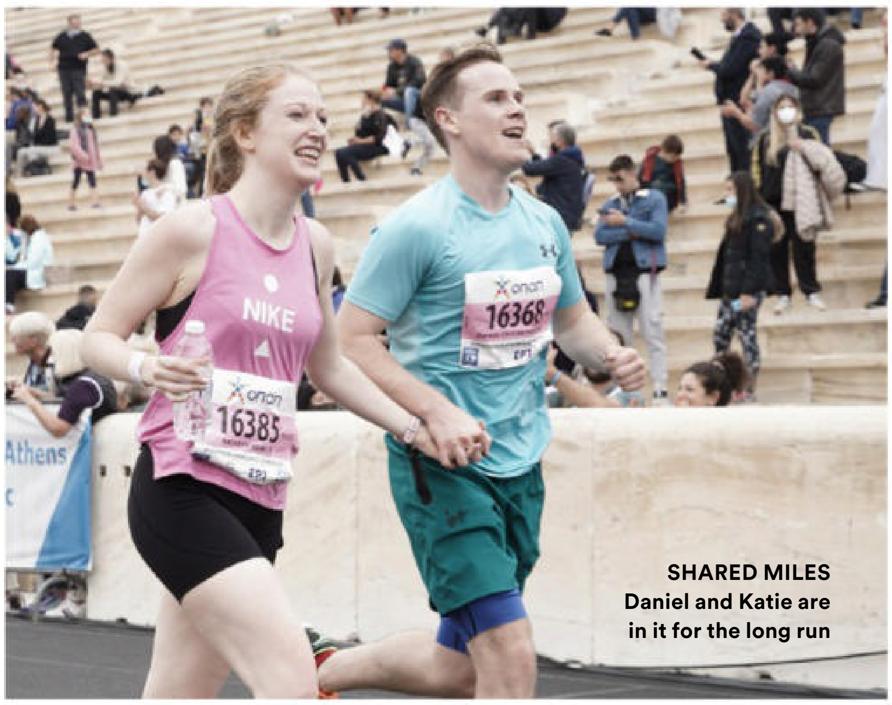
It's clear that I need to make more of an effort, that I have to get back into the habit. My timing isn't great, as the days are short and cold now, but I miss how I felt when I ran more often and ran further. Running can be hard, but not running can be harder if the memory of it is fresh. I've resigned myself to the fact that I won't be able to match my brothers and I may never again run as well as I used to, but that's fine. Frankly, that has to be fine.

It was good to see my brothers and to be reminded how much running had been part of my life, and to resolve to make it so again. Best of all, we played several games of pool after the squash-court slaughter and I beat them both. At the end, I wasn't even out of breath.

Sam Murphy is away and returns next month

ILLUSTRATION: PIETARI POSTI. *SOURCE: MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

LETTER OF THE MONTH



SHARED MILES
Daniel and Katie are in it for the long run

RUNNERS IN ARMS

A lot of people see running as an individual sport, but it's much more than that. My wife Katie and I started dating through our running club and have just got married! We actually got engaged the day after running the Athens Marathon last year. This photo shows us crossing the finish line together. Our relationship blossomed in no small part thanks to many miles run together; this is a prime example of how running with others builds relationships and friendships. Only a small proportion of shared miles will end in marriage, but every shared mile – be that with one person or a hundred – will make you closer to the people around you. So here's to running with people: Saturday morning parkruns, miles with friends, my miles with Katie. You'll see us crossing the finish line together at the London Marathon 2023!

Daniel Croome-Horgan

RW What a heartwarming story! Wishing you many more happy miles together. We sincerely hope you both wore running shoes on your wedding day.

What's inspired, impressed or annoyed you lately about running or runners? The writer of the winning email or letter receives a pair of Saucony Triumph 20s, worth £145 (available in a colour of your choosing, if in stock).

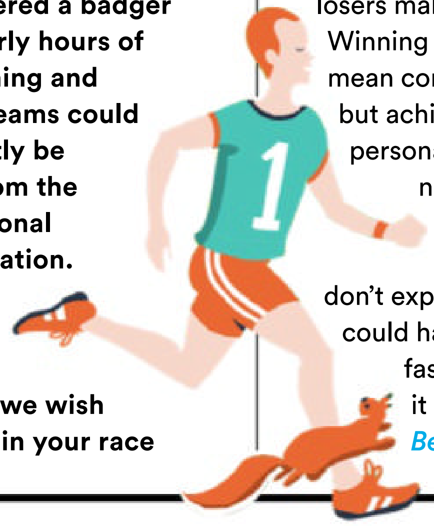
RUNNER'S WORLD, House of Hearst,
30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ
Email letters@runnersworld.co.uk
Twitter and Facebook @runnersworlduk

ENDURANCE ANIMAL

Having changed my running routes to some more rural adventures recently, I have begun to notice a lot more wildlife. During a particularly taxing outing this weekend, some cheeky squirrels seemed to be dashing across my path as if to challenge me to pick up the pace. Challenge accepted. With the nights drawing in, I think my next challenge will be to out-sprint an urban fox. Anyone else enjoy a spot of competition from mother nature?

Rob Neary

RW On a 24-hour relay organised by *RW*, one of the team encountered a badger in the early hours of the morning and their screams could apparently be heard from the International Space Station. You are clearly a braver sort and we wish you well in your race against the fox (but our money's on the fox).



NO EXCUSES

Lately, I've been inspired by runners that avoid making excuses. It's far too easy to list all the reasons why you might not hit the pace or distance before a run, either to convince yourself or your fellow runners. I'm definitely guilty of this. I'm inspired by the runners that just go for it. You're only as good as you are on the day. If you convince yourself that you won't run well, then you won't. Colin Sahlman (3:56 high-school mile) said in an interview, 'Winners make it happen, losers make excuses.' Winning doesn't always mean coming first, but achieving your personal goals. So next time you upload your run to Strava, don't explain how you could have gone faster – make it happen!

Benjy Carr

TYPE 1 FUN

zarote International
unning Challenge
Club
La S
2019
168

In 1999, aged 22, I left university overweight and looking for a challenge. Taking the plunge and running around the block, I mustered up enough courage to join the local gym. After months of walking on the treadmill daily, I joined a running club and made lifelong friends. In 2013, while training for the Manchester Marathon, I became very thin, hungry and tired. Normal marathon training, I thought! Somehow, I managed to complete the marathon in 4:13, only to get thinner and hungrier! Two weeks later, I walked into a local chemist and had a simple finger-prick test. I was extremely poorly and that was the start of my type 1 diabetic journey. After three years of not racing due to being scared of what could happen, I decided to go back. I am now looking forward to my fifth Lanzarote running challenge – five runs in five days. Diabetes changed my life but didn't stop it. Running is my passion and diabetes does not get in my way. To all the diabetic runners out there, you are amazing.

Catherine Meggitt

WE ASK, YOU ANSWER

WHO IS YOUR RUNNING SUPERHERO AND WHY?

'Kelly Holmes. Such an inspiration, winning two Olympic gold medals in my distances and I was fortunate enough to meet her'
Trisha Ronney

'Mo Farah. Nice guy, Arsenal fan. Enough said'
Glen Baker-Adams

'Eliud Kipchoge. Is there really a need to say why?'
Leanne Winters

'Steve Jones. Most memorable moment was him beating Charlie Spedding in the London Marathon after stopping for a toilet break'
Michael Burford

'The late Jane Tomlinson from Yorkshire. She ran marathons and many other gruelling challenges while terminally ill with cancer'
Sylvia Ross

'Allie Bailey. She is real! She tells all, the highs and lows, but also wants to make running fun and accessible'
Marie Burton

'Haile Gebrselassie. One of the very best, humble and makes it look effortless'
Tasha Kirk

'Michael Johnson. World record beater and had such a unique running style'
Simon Frampton

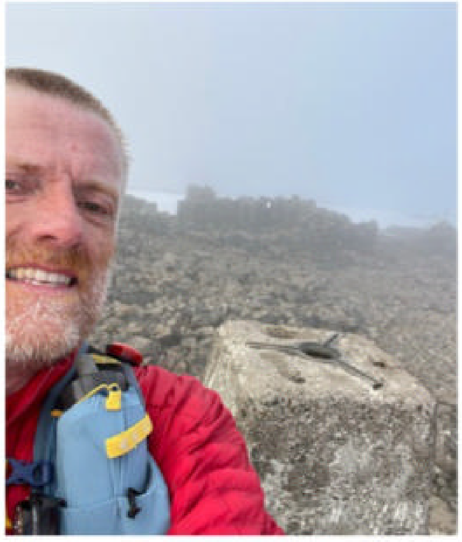
WORDS: RICK PEARSON. ILLUSTRATIONS: PIETARI POSTI; FABIO BUONOCORE AT SYNERGY ART

SNAP CHAT

#PEAKPOSITION

SHOW US A PIC OF YOU ATOP A MOUNTAIN

'Snowdon' ***Garry Doolan***



'Ben Nevis' ***Gareth Allen***

'Pen y Fan' ***Paul Smith***

POLL

WHAT'S THE SMALLEST TIME WINDOW YOU NEED TO DEEM A RUN WORTHWHILE?

LESS THAN 20 MINUTES 12%

20-30 MINUTES 57%

30-40 MINUTES 25%

MORE THAN 40 MINUTES 6%

*Based on an RW poll with 611 votes

BY THE NUMBERS

PAUL MINTER

36, FROM EAST LONDON, RAN AROUND THE UK COASTLINE BETWEEN MARCH AND OCTOBER 2022

AFTER FIVE TOURS AND ALMOST TWO DECADES IN THE ARMY, PAUL MINTER WAS MEDICALLY DISCHARGED WITH PTSD. 'I had severe paranoia from feeling like I was on high alert,' he says. 'Half of your brain is telling you you're in danger all the time.' His expeience, plus the number of friends who had taken their own lives, showed him how much mental help is needed for people in the military. So, with three fellow servicemen, he became a trustee of a new charity, Head Up, and planned a run to raise awareness and money to set up a residential retreat for veterans. He skipped isolated northwest Scotland in order to have company throughout his journey and did it all without a support team so he could meet as many people as possible, sharing his story while running with strangers and sleeping in their homes.

14

ARMY FRIENDS LOST TO SUICIDE. 'THREE DIED SINCE I STARTED THIS RUN'

£400,000

AMOUNT RAISED AT THE TIME OF WRITING. HIS CHARITY, HEAD UP, AIMS TO OPEN A RETREAT OFFERING RESIDENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH COURSES FOR CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY. HEAD-UP.ORG.UK

4

Coastlines run: first England, then Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

53.4769° N, 3.0430° W

THE COORDINATES OF CROSBY BEACH IN MERSEYSIDE, THE START AND FINISH POINT FOR THE RUN

14 miles

Longest detour. 'I timed my arrival wrong to cross an estuary in Cumbria and had to go 14 miles inland to get around it'

7

PAIRS OF TRAINERS. 'I WORE ON CLOUDS. THEY DIDN'T SPONSOR ME, BUT I DID GET ONE FREE PAIR'

700

PEOPLE RAN OR CYCLED ALONGSIDE HIM. 'I SHARED MY TRACKING LINK AND PEOPLE AMBUSHED ME ALONG THE WAY. ONE LADY RAN WITH ME FOR 100M. A FRIEND RAN WITH ME FOR 10 DAYS'

1

Snake bite. Minter was bitten by an adder in Essex

169

THE NUMBER OF TIMES MINTER RAN A MARATHON DISTANCE DURING THE 214 DAYS OF HIS ENDEAVOUR

39

Most miles covered in one day. 'I looked forward to the big runs. The smaller ones were over and done with, but when you go over 30, your mind goes to this new place'

96,356M

THE TOTAL ASCENT OF THE JOURNEY. THAT'S 314 SHARDS, TO MAKE A CHANGE FROM MEASURING HEIGHT IN EVERESTS

WORDS: DAVID SMYTH. PHOTOGRAPHY: STUDIO 33; GETTY IMAGES. ILLUSTRATION: G TAYLOR

Tonky Talk

BY PAUL TONKINSON

DEAR DIARY, IT FEELS LIKE A NEW CHAPTER IN MY RUNNING

ILLUSTRATION: PIETARI POSTI

If a tree falls in a forest and there's nobody there, does it make a sound? Yes, obviously. If a run isn't recorded, did it actually happen? Again, yes. Is it more fun to keep a training diary? I've recently concluded it is.

For years, I've been running off grid. I made a token effort to join Strava, but it was way more involved than I wanted. I get it, though. It's a community, a motivational group dynamic that can be positive. Maybe it's because I work in an industry that's inherently performative that I saw running as an escape, just for me. No one knows I'm out there – floating, dreaming, sweating in the woods.

As a teenage athlete, I kept detailed training logs. Every month, a page; every day, a single line. The majority of days were full. After every week, a total mileage (40 to 50) and every month, a tally (usually 200-plus). Page upon page of effort, varying sessions and races. Cross-country in the winter, track in summer, peppered with five-milers, 10Ks and half marathons on the road. I'd look at it and learn, take pride in it. This is how fitness happens, over time – the accumulation of days and weeks and months.

When I was aiming for a quick marathon in middle-age, I started recording again. It was fun. A moment of quiet satisfaction, sitting down to note my activity, watching the mileage tot up. A big red star when the goal was achieved.

Post sub-three, the recording faltered. All the gaps in the diary got a bit depressing. So I stopped. Who wants to record this slow, agonising slide down the other side? The running continued, of course, along with sporadic injuries and general non-achievement in that area. Now my body seems to have settled, so I've started logging again. Having a training diary makes me want to fill it, so I find myself running more.

Often running involves a story we tell ourselves. We are 'coming back' or 'pushing it', while the lucky ones are 'on fire'. The diary connects you to this story, the peaks and troughs of it. It tells you that the training is worth it, part of a continual experience. These runs are investments in the present and future you. The story's worth tracking.

Whether it's couch to 5K or marathon to 100-miler, it's charting something. Externally, the miles change you; they build muscles and strength. But internally also, something's happening. Three weeks ago, I went for a five-miler while hungover. I was feeling 'heavy, overweight, stupid'. Two days ago, I ran eight miles and 'pushed the last mile (6:43), felt strong'. How can this not make you feel better?

I'm feeling more intentional about my running. I'm writing just short-term goals and working out how to achieve them. It trickles into other areas of life. I'm eating better, drinking less, sleeping more soundly. As ever, running gives my life shape.

After I run, I pick up the diary and write. It's a more private, individual accountability than Strava, but it's working. My previous runs existed. I carried them with me. But it's good to see these runs on paper. For all this running off-watch, it's good to remind myself that races are time- and distance-bound.

I intend to do a 10K next month. I've written down the time I want and I'm taking intentional steps to achieve it. It feels like a new chapter.

Paul is a stand-up comedian and co-host of the *Running Commentary* podcast

RUNNING GAGS

by Rick Pearson

If running shoes could make music...

Nike VaporMcFly
4% better than Busted. Is that a compliment?

John Lee Hoka
For slow, soulful miles

Saucony Robinson
Don't wear these at the track or it will end in tears...

Nike Genesis
Great for long, rambly outings, but liable to falling apart

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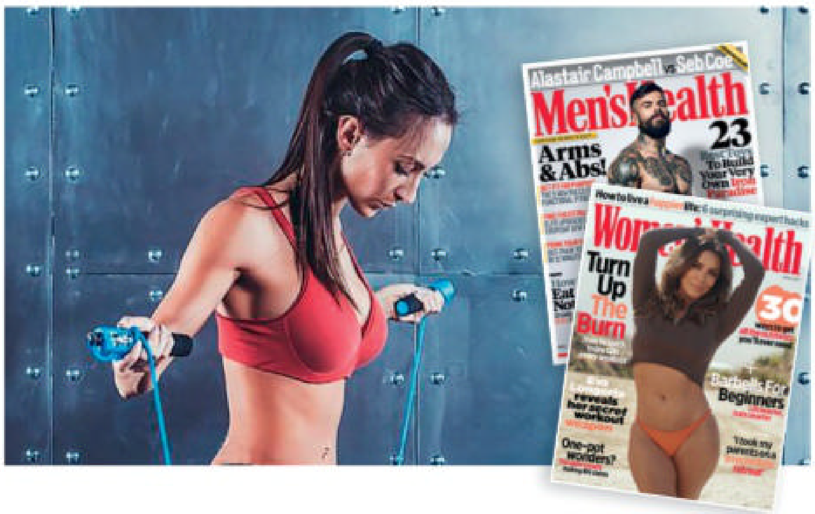

FOR THE FITNESS FANATIC

Workout ideas from top PTs, plus delicious meals and nutrition tips in our magazines and special editions offer the perfect motivation for those looking to achieve their health and fitness goals.

FOR THE OUTDOORSY TYPE

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The Flamingo Diaries

BY LISA JACKSON

I'M NOT SURE I CAN ACHIEVE MY NEW GOAL, BUT I'LL TRI

I'm a new year's resolution junkie. My top one for 2023? A half-Ironman triathlon! Yep, you read that right. Over a decade after my last Olympic-distance tri, I'm determined to have the word 'Ironman' on my tombstone – so what if it's preceded by the word 'half'.

My latest challenge was conceived while training for the kilometre-long Brighton Pier to Pier Swim. At first, I thought it entirely doable but then I had a reality check. After swimming in the sea almost every day for a month, I decided to swim 400m and encountered a ferocious current. Try as I might, there were times when I just couldn't make any headway. Eventually, Cigo, one of my sea-swimming friends, dove in to offer assistance, managing with just two big tugs to haul me to the pole I'd been swimming towards for 90 minutes.

I panicked – if I couldn't swim 400m unaided, how was I going to manage a kilometre in under an hour? My sea-swimming friends said I'd be fine and Colin, a former lifeguard, taught me sidestroke, to use when I got tired.

Nonetheless, I was terrified. Having concluded that my technique was the problem, I hastily organised a swimming lesson. My coach, Marianne, a former Team GB triathlete, was incredibly patient and assured me that my swimming was not nearly as bad as I'd made it out to be. When I told her my fear of not finishing was so great that I was thinking of pulling out, she said, 'Have a go – if you can't make it, swim back to shore.' And just like that, my confidence received a huge boost and I decided to give the swim my best shot.

After our lesson, Marianne revealed she'd done several Ironman triathlons. 'I've always wanted to do one,' I said, 'but I suspect that's a bit overambitious.'

'Why not a half Ironman?' asked Marianne. I was stunned. Here was a veteran triathlete suggesting that swimming 1.9km, cycling 90km and running 21.1km was within my grasp. But if Marianne could believe I was capable of doing it, so could I.

Two weeks later, I caught the train to Brighton with Colin, his wife Julia, and Cigo. My tummy was churning like a washing machine as I ran into the sea, but I soon got into my stroke stride and, to my surprise, started making progress. When I emerged from the water, my friends were there to help me make my wobbly legged way on to the shingle. I'd come second last, but the photos of all of us grinning like Cheshire cats are ones I'll treasure forever.

Marianne's belief in me reminded me of the two other occasions when I tackled seemingly impossible challenges. When I dreamt of doing the 56-mile Comrades Marathon, my husband, Graham, assured me I could do it, even though the pace of my first 10K time trial was 20% slower than it needed to be if I was to beat the 12-hour cut-off. And when I expressed a desire to join the 100 Marathon Club, one of its members didn't laugh, as I'd expected; instead, he assured me my goal was possible. So, thank you Marianne, Graham and Mr Mystery Runner for making me believe in myself. As I've repeatedly proved, so much of running success is not about knowing you can definitely achieve something – it's about having the courage to dare.

WORDS TO GIVE YOU WINGS

'The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it.'

The words of JM Barrie, creator of *Peter Pan*, remind us of the importance of unshakeable self-belief. If you look around for people who can help you banish your doubts, you'll find them – and they'll become the wind beneath your wings.

Lisa is the author of two bestselling running books, *Running Made Easy* and *Your Pace Or Mine?* Her latest books – *Travel Seekness* and *Travel Agents* – both contain chapters about running and have been released as audiobooks.

ILLUSTRATION: PIETARI POSTI

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO *nailing* YOUR FIRST MARATHON

Everything you need to know to train smart, fuel right and smash through 'the wall'

The decision to run your first marathon comes with a mix of emotions that tend to swing between excitement and fear. But with the right training and preparation, your debut 26.2 should be an exciting and satisfying (if challenging) journey to the finish line. And with the proper mindset, it can even be fun, too. 'Approach the race with joy and gratitude, not as a life-or-death thing,' says Molly Seidel, an Olympic marathon medallist. 'A lot of people are overly serious, but you can be focused and still have fun with it.' So take a deep breath and read on for our best tips, tricks and expert advice to help take you all the way to the finish line of running's most iconic distance.

A marathon can be fun – if you approach it right

►

Coach Andrew Kastor lives in California with his wife, Deena, Olympic marathon bronze medallist

WORDS: ALLY SPIROFF. PHOTOGRAPHY: (OPENING SPREAD) GETTY IMAGES; (THIS SPREAD) JOE HALE; JOHNNY ZHANG

The Golden Rules OF FIRST-TIME MARATHON TRAINING

Give yourself 20 weeks to train → Beginners should start training long before the race, says Andrew Kastor, coach of the Asics Mammoth Track Club in Mammoth Lakes, California. This four-and-half-month training cycle builds up your endurance and aerobic capacity – the secret sauce in a marathon.

'A lot of people could go out there and drag themselves through a 5K, but it's much harder to do a marathon if you haven't put in the work,' says Rob Watson, ex-pro marathoner and head coach for Mile2Marathon in Vancouver. 'The more time you give yourself to do it, the more prepared you will be on race day. You don't want to cram for a marathon.'

Get comfortable running at least 18 miles → Long runs accomplish two things, says Kastor. 'Number one: they develop confidence. And number two: they train your body to recognise what it's like to run on fatigued legs – because when you get about 20 miles into a marathon, your legs are like stubs.'

Slowly build up to 18 to 20 miles for two long runs, Kastor says. At the start of your training cycle, take your most recent long run and alternate adding one and two miles each week, until you hit at least 18 miles. (So, if your longest run is 10 miles, run 11 the next week, then 13, then 14, and so on.)

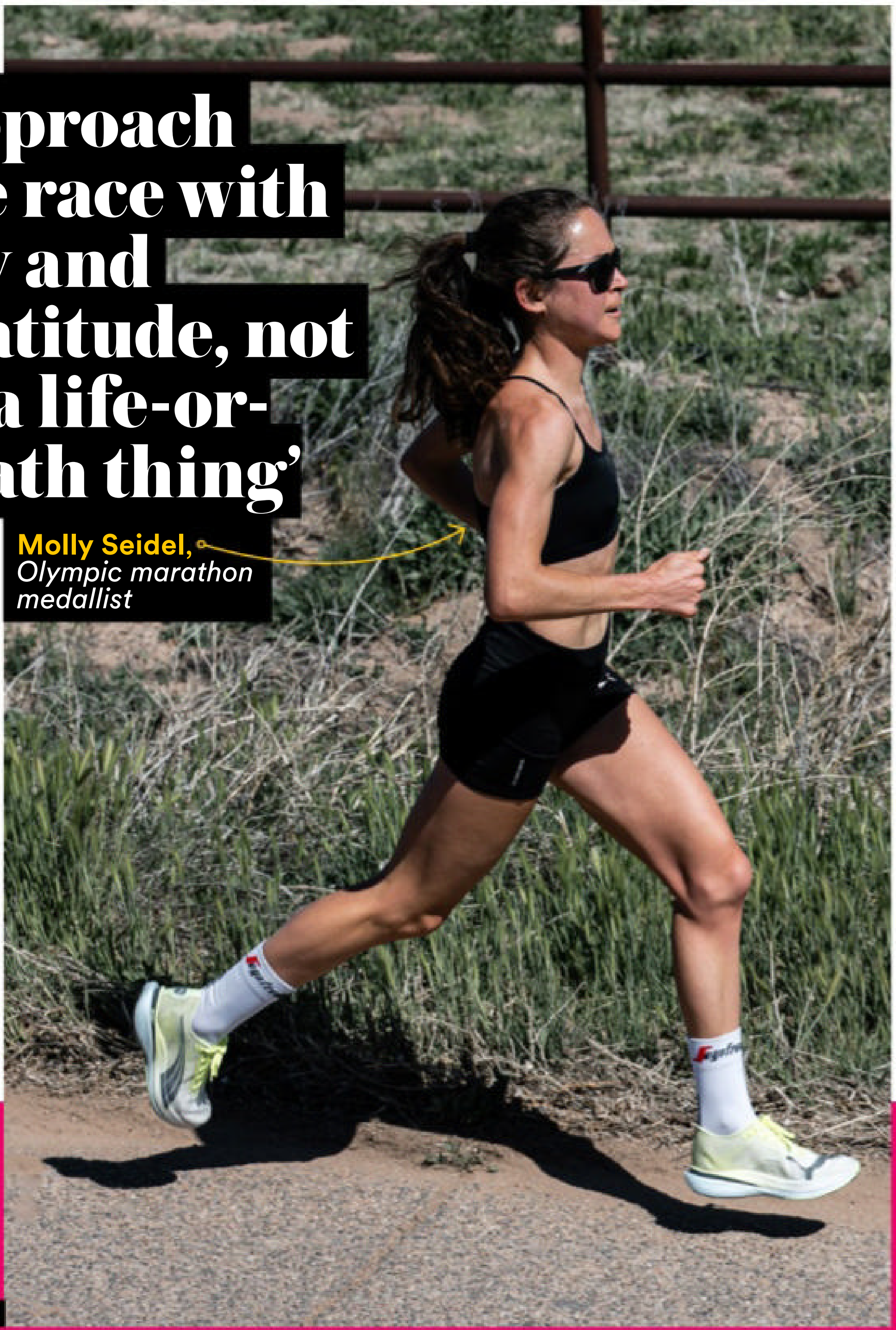
After you hit at least 18, step down to about 13 miles for three weeks, Kastor says. Then go back up for one more 18-miler to close out the training cycle.

Find a support system → Working with a running group or a coach by your side will help you go the distance. 'Sometimes you're pushing the group and sometimes you're getting pulled along,' says Watson. 'But either way, your training partners are right next to you, breathing and working just as hard.' Ask your local running shop or search social media for clubs and groups to help you find the right crew. Working with others can also give you accountability, structure and confidence. 'A marathon build-up on paper could look perfect, but when it comes down to actually doing it, you might get ill, or have work or life stress,' says Watson. 'You're going to have to change your plan, and your coach's experience can guide you through it, while giving you the confidence that you're still doing it right.'

Take two days a week off from running → 'You need to allow your body time to adapt,' says Watson. A day without running may not feel productive, but your body is recuperating from any minor muscle tears or tissue damage that's occurred during your training and getting used to the strength you've built up. Plus, it allows your mind to reset and will keep your motivation high. It all adds up to a faster race time.

New marathoners should dedicate one day every week to a cross-training activity such as cycling, swimming or yoga, Kastor says, and also take a day completely off each week. On these rest days, foam-roll, stretch, eat well, sleep and let your mind and body heal from the stress of marathon training.

Add marathon pace to some long runs → Race-day success, Kastor says, 'comes down to the long runs, training and getting used to the pace.' Run six to eight miles at marathon pace during your long runs. As your body gets more familiar with race pace, it also becomes more efficient at it. It will also get used to running the pace on tired legs. Schedule just two or three of these marathon-pace long runs during your training cycle, says ►



'Approach the race with joy and gratitude, not as a life-or-death thing'

Molly Seidel, *Olympic marathon medallist*

Jeff Gaudette, coach and former Hansons-Brooks Original Distance Project pro runner. And spread them out by at least two weeks, with the last one occurring no closer than three weeks before your race.

Another option for an 18- to 20-miler with marathon pace is a progressive long run, Gaudette says. Take the first couple of miles easy, miles two to seven at 15 seconds per mile slower than goal marathon pace, miles eight to 13 at goal pace and the remaining miles at 10 seconds per mile faster than goal race pace. This run is best implemented in the final eight weeks of your training plan.

Beginners often feel nervous about running out of energy before they make it to the finish line. Gaudette says the progressive long run is one of the best ways to train your body and mind to push through the hardest part of the race: the last few miles. This is also a good option for runners using longer training plans to help reinvigorate your marathon prep leading up to race day.

Train for the course → The best way to prepare for a race's unique challenges is by running the course. But if that's not possible, check out the topography. 'It's about being prepared, controlling the controllable,' Watson says. 'Take the Berlin Marathon versus the New York City Marathon. They're both 26.2 miles, but Berlin is pancake flat, so you just have to practise sticking to a pace, whereas NYC has a lot more hills, so you have to prepare for the ups and downs.'

For hilly courses, Kastor recommends incorporating a few hills into some of your long runs. And if you're training for a hilly marathon but there are no hills near your home, you might have to get creative with it, Kastor says. 'Run up stairs or go to a gym and bump up the incline on the treadmill.'

Think about whether you want to run through city or countryside

IS THE 20-MILE TRAINING RUN OVERRATED?

During their training cycles, many coaches – including most featured here – tell their athletes to hit 20 miles at least once. 'There's a big psychological benefit on race day to completing the 20-mile training run,' says Kastor. It's a major confidence booster, Watson agrees. But is 20 really a magic number?

'It's just a round number,' says Kevin Hanson, coach and co-author of *Hansons Marathon Method*. The book and method have guided thousands of amateur runners to marathon finish lines with training plans that never ask for more than a 16-mile long run.

'The biggest drawback to our plan is convincing people that 20 is just a number,' he says. The Hansons Method prioritises consistent work over the course of a week to build your overall mileage, rather than emphasising one extra-long run in a week.

A 20-mile run is overkill for many new marathoners. For runners averaging 10-minute miles, a 20-miler will take almost three and a half hours. 'Running over three hours for a training run has been shown to have a point of diminishing returns,' says Roberta Groner, a coach for Central Park Track Club in New York and a pro marathoner.

Hanson has his athletes practise their marathon pace over and over again, 'on days when you're tired and on days when you're hungrier than you should be at the start'. This way, you get used to running on sore legs as well as holding back when fresh. 'Often, training plans have you take the day off before a 20-miler, which is like a mini taper,' Hanson says. Instead, he wants your long run to feel like a simulation of the end of the race, when your legs are feeling the fatigue.

So should we all forsake the 20-miler? Not if you enjoy that style of training plan or it works better for your schedule. Plans featuring a handful of long runs in the region of 20 miles are more feasible for the runner who amps up their training on the weekends, Kastor says.

Or if you're the type of runner who wants to spread their training evenly across the weeks – like Groner, who found the Hansons Method was better for her as she was raising young kids – then dive into that approach.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY; MELISSA LYTTLE

HOW TO AVOID THE *Dreaded Wall*

Keira D'Amato set her then US record time of 2:19:12 in 2022

The marathon wall → When your legs can barely move, you feel like you're crawling, battling your mind over your body. Also known as 'bonking', it even happens to pros, like Keira D'Amato, former US record holder in the marathon, who hit the wall hard at around mile 20 of her first marathon in 2013 and had to walk most of her last six miles.

You hit the wall when your body runs out of glycogen, which is energy stored in your muscles and liver, says Dr Alison Helms, a certified personal trainer and creator of the Women's Running Academy. Our bodies store about 2,200 calories in glycogen, which will fuel us for somewhere around 18 to 20 miles. Once your body's main fuel source is gone, your brain 'wants you to stop and turns on all the signals', Dr Helms says. You may cramp up, feel fatigued or even have GI problems.

Hitting the wall may be a common problem in the marathon, but it's far from inevitable if you fuel properly and run smart.

Start refuelling as early as 20 minutes in → 'If you run out of carb stores, it's really hard to get them back,' says Kastor. So take in your fuel before you need it – as early as 20 minutes into the race. And aim to take in 30 to 60 grams of carbohydrates – or two energy gels – every hour during the race.

Dehydration can be just as nasty as – and actually more dangerous than – bonking, so combine your fluid intake with your gels, says sports nutritionist Monica Reinagel. She suggests taking on one or two cups of the water or sports drink at every aid station along the course.

Plan out and practise refuelling → Kastor gets his runners to find out what fuel and fluids will be offered along the course of their planned race to help them gauge how much nutrition they need to carry. Then they train while fuelling with those exact products and flavours throughout their training cycles.

If you do need to supplement the aid stations, make sure you have room to carry your fuel. Watson recommends storing your gels in fuel belts, pockets, sports bra or arm warmers.

Practise your fuel plan on your long training runs to make sure your stomach can handle it, that you're able to get it all into your mouth while running and that the gear you'll wear is comfortable.

Check your pace regularly → Kastor recommends checking your pace around the first 5K – are you going too fast? 'It's not too late to slow down at this point,' he says. If you get to mile 10 and already feel like you've been pushing too hard, 'chances are pretty high that you'll hit a wall', says Diane Nukuri, an Olympic Marathoner for Burundi and three-time top-eight finisher at a World Major Marathon.

'If you get to 30K [around 18 miles] feeling good,' says Kastor, 'I give everyone the green light to pick it up by five to 15 seconds per mile, and try to hold that pace all the way to the finish line. You can make up a couple of minutes in the last few miles.'

Focus on you → Your brain is busy during a run, monitoring blood volume, sweat rates, core temperature, blood sugar and stress hormones, says Dan Benardot, author of *Nutrition For Serious Athletes*. 'Mental fatigue will lead to the perception of muscle fatigue.'

It comes down to mind over matter, says Dr Christian Zepp, a sports scientist and sports psychology expert. Visualise 'positive alternatives to the wall, such as anticipating a runner's high at certain mile markers,' he says. Shift your focus internally and use positive self-talk to motivate yourself back on track, adds Dr Zepp. Tell yourself to keep calm or focus on highly specific aspects of the race, such as your running form or the exact pace for the mile you're in, until you pass the wall by.

Carb-load the week before → In the week leading up to the race, 70% of your total calories should come from carbs, Dr Helms says. (For a 68kg runner eating 2,700 calories a day, for example, that's about 450g of carbs.) Two to three days before the race, increase to 80% to 90% from carbs (for that same runner, that's 540 to 850 grams of carbs). Bread, pasta, oats and rice are all solid carb-loading choices. ►

The Par
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all the sigh

THE BEST MARATHONS TO GET HOOKED ON 26.2

ATHENS MARATHON
Athens, Greece, November
Athens is home to both the legend of the marathon and the first marathon race – held in 1896 to open the Olympics' modern era. Soak up the history of the ancient city on the route, which finishes at the Panathenaic Stadium.

EDINBURGH MARATHON
Edinburgh, May
The centrepiece of the Edinburgh Marathon Festival, which squeezes nine marvellous events into a weekend, always delivers a great atmosphere. The route starts in the city centre with a lovely downhill to get you going, then follows the coast east before turning back and finishing in Musselburgh.

LONDON MARATHON
London, April
The big one. Arguably the best crowd support on the planet, incredible camaraderie among runners and an iconic route taking in Tower Bridge and The Mall finish. Getting in through the oversubscribed ballot is hard, so add to your list of reasons to run a marathon by raising funds for one of the charities that offer places in the race.

PARIS MARATHON
Paris, France, April
Overseas but accessible by train rather than plane, with a route that takes in pretty much every sight in this glorious city. Plus there's great support to power you to the finish, and post-race 'refuelling options' are pretty strong, too.

MANCHESTER MARATHON
Greater Manchester, April
It may not have the rep of the capital's race, but the UK's second-largest 26.2 serves up a great atmosphere to keep you going and it's one of the flattest marathon routes anywhere – with a mere 55m of elevation along the entire course.

LOCH NESS MARATHON
Inverness-shire, October
If you'd rather get your inspiration from stunning scenery than big crowds, this gem follows the full 22-mile length of the famous loch, plus another few to take you to the finish in Inverness. Starting at an altitude of 350m and finishing close to sea level, it's almost entirely downhill.

I FEARED THE MARATHON. I Ran it Anyway.

How writer Dave Holmes faced his fears and went the distance

'A human being in this modern world has plenty to worry about: societal collapse, environmental disaster, any number of future *Batman* reboots. But there are some possibilities that we fail to consider, fears we don't know we have until they move into our heads, and then we're immediately envious of our earlier, untroubled selves.

What I'm saying is, I didn't appreciate signing up for my first marathon and then finding out my toenails might fall off.

A first marathon is an intimidating task, even for a seasoned runner. For the rest of us, the race date looms on the calendar and stirs up fears new and old, well-founded and implausible. We are correct to have concerns when we take on our first marathon, and we are correct to have even more serious concerns once we fully comprehend what we've got ourselves into. In a sense, conquering those concerns is the real challenge a first-time marathon runner must face. But if I can do it, so can you.

When I signed up to do my first, I was aware that the training process would be gruelling. I knew to anticipate sore knees and tight hips. It's supposed to be nearly impossible – remember, the race gets its name from the story of Pheidippides, a messenger who ran the 26-ish miles from Marathon to Athens in order to announce the Greek army's victory over the Persians, then promptly collapsed and died. I knew not to expect an extra-long walk in the park, and if the paintings and sculptures are to be believed, young Pheidi was ripped, so what chance did I have? Plus, I'd chosen the New York City Marathon, arguably the most popular one in the world, the one in the city where I'd spent my twenties, which raised the equally gruesome possibility that I might be seen at my pinkest and most vulnerable by thousands of spectators, including people I might have dated.

When I started telling people I was thinking about doing a marathon, I received nothing but encouragement. But when I actually signed up for it, the very moment my payment was processed and it was too late to turn back, that's when I started hearing the stories. The friend whose nipples started bleeding at mile 14. The beloved uncle who lost control of his bowels at mile 23. And the toenails. So many lost toenails. The images that played in my mind were bone-chilling. I knew that I'd be pushing my body to its limits, but I had not considered how my body might push back.

There was no escape. I'd already told everyone I'd ever met that I was doing it, and the costs of hiring extras, building sets and staging a fake one for a photo shoot were prohibitive. The only available exit was on the other side of the finish line. I was going to have to do the damn thing.

What saved me was remembering my *why*. I hadn't signed up for a marathon out of a deep love for running, or competition or registration fees. I had signed up for a challenge. I'd settled into a satisfying professional life and I found myself choosing to do the things I knew I could do well, and delegating or declining the rest. My vanity and pride had begun to deny me the simple thrill of slowly learning how to do something new. My soul craved the experience of completing a task in November that I could not possibly have completed in May. We need these things. They keep us growing.

As I trained, I found that those grisly physical complications weren't what I was worried about anyway. Those were just the surface fears, the ones I was more comfortable engaging with. And honestly, they're pretty easy to avoid: lube up those nips, eat sensibly in the days before the race, make sure you have access to a toilet that morning, and you're good to go. (There's not much you can do about the toenails.)

There's nowhere to go but inward when everyone else is in bed and you're running an 18-miler. When I was alone out on the road and the fatigue had worn down my defences, I found I'd been masking my real fears, and those were much more disturbing. What if I couldn't actually do what I set out to do? What if this made me take a good honest look at my physical limitations? What if I could have done it last year, but sometime between then and now I began my inevitable physical decline?

? What if I'm just not good enough? What if I never was?

→ Failure is a valuable opportunity for growth – and it's horrible. No one wants to fail, or fall, or give up, or be forced by paramedics to give up, and absolutely no one wants to do those things in front of thousands of spectators holding Jelly Babies, motivating/amusing signs and inappropriately early pints.

Running a marathon is a challenge, a real challenge, and real challenges are terrifying. There's just no getting around it. The answer is to put one foot in front of the other. Here's what I did: I roped in my friends to cheer, and I asked them to put themselves somewhere between mile 20 and the finish line – that 6.2-mile mystery zone that you don't train for. I knew I'd need encouragement then, and I knew it would need to be from familiar faces. I also gave them strict instructions not to tell me I looked good. 'We'll both know you're lying,' I said.'

But the most important thing that I did was to train properly, then trust it. Trust myself. This is the magic bullet, I'm afraid. Do the training, let it ruin a few months of weekend mornings, and that's how you buy yourself a smooth race day. You overcome your worst fears that way. You might even have fun. Just take it one step at a time. Ultimately, I only lost two toenails. They grew back.

Dave Holmes runs near his home in Los Angeles, in Griffith Park

'What saved me was remembering my *why*. I had signed up for a challenge'

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; JESSICA PONS

We can't run away from this

Running is both threatened by, and a surprisingly large contributor to, the climate emergency, says ultrarunner, author and accidental activist Damian Hall. He believes runners need to face some hard truths and take steps to reduce our footprints

ILLUSTRATIONS: DENIS CARRIER

It's time we looked
at changing our
running habits

►

Running seems such a primal, simple, innocent thing that brings great happiness to me and many others.

RACE FINISHER

We need to avoid running our planet into exhaustion

Surely it can't be doing any real harm? It hurts my legs (foam rolling) and sometimes my ego (parkrun), but when it comes to our climate and ecological emergency, it's not Formula One. Millions of footprints with a miniscule carbon footprint, surely?'

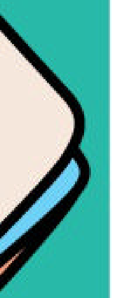
That's what I used to think. And I almost wish I didn't know what I do now. Which is that running is surprisingly bad for the planet. I hate to be a doom-monger, but I have some gloomy news: our runs in beautiful places are contributing to the destruction of those precious spaces.

Anyone who has run a mass-participation race will have seen a sea of discarded plastic cups, bottles and gel wrappers. Then there are the free T-shirts heading to lie unused in drawers, and the things we do use – the global trainer industry creates as much carbon dioxide and equivalent (CO_2e) greenhouse gas emissions (ghg) as the entire UK. Our clothing is even worse, then there's our fuel – runners tend to consume more animal protein than non-runners, which comes from the second most destructive industry on the planet. It all adds up to a horrifying footprint and I haven't even mentioned running's biggest negative impact yet.

Climate scientists say we need to reduce ghg emissions – primarily by kicking our fossil fuel addiction – by 45% this decade. Earth is forecast by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to be 1.5°C warmer than pre-industrial levels within five years and between 2.7°C and 3.2°C warmer by the end of the century, which will have devastating and irreversible consequences. Google them and you won't sleep tonight.

The negative effects are already being felt in many ways, and specifically in sport. The competitive ski season has been shortened, Australian Open tennis matches have been suspended due to extreme heat and international cricket due to air pollution. Athletes retired mid-match and left arenas in wheelchairs at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and the marathon was held 400 miles from the capital because of the intense heat. A study in *The Lancet* prompted speculation that 'climate change might spell the heat death of the summer Olympics as we currently know them'. And it's not just the pros who are being affected. Extreme weather has led to race cancellations in Britain (eg, the 2021 Cheviot Goat) and the death of 21 runners in a Chinese ultramarathon in 2021 due to a dramatic change of conditions. (Research has shown that human-caused global heating has made extreme weather nine or 10 times more likely.)

Air pollution is a major silent killer, responsible for 8.7 million deaths globally (one in every five), and we runners breathe in more often and more deeply (a marathon runner inhales as much oxygen as someone sitting for two days), usually bypassing nasal filters. And those places we love to run in are dying. We're living in the sixth mass extinction, with 68% of amphibians and reptiles gone since 1960 and 75% of insects in the past 25 years. The UK has lost 50% of its wildlife and is in the bottom 10% globally for biodiversity. When we run in the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and Brecon Beacons, there are almost no trees, birds or animals. They're biodiversity deserts.



Is running really part of the problem?

DAN LAWSON AND CHARLOTTE JALLEY from ReRun Clothing sounded the alarm for me. I'd seen headlines about polar bears and dwindling ice, and noticed fewer insects splattered on the windscreen in summer, which was worrying, but didn't seem to directly affect my life – or my running. They showed how it did.

When Dan, a GB ultrarunner, and his wife Charlotte set up an online second-hand shop (rerunclothing.org), they were bombarded with unwanted race T-shirts. Tens of thousands of them. Thousands of unwanted trainers, too, often in perfectly good condition. Our running kit has an XXXL-sized impact on the planet. All clothing and shoes release CO_2e in their production and are part of our overconsumption crisis. Everything that's produced has a CO_2e footprint, and the clothing industry could be responsible for as much as 10% of global ghg – far more than aviation. Many of us have drawers full of unwanted race tees and spare kit, and churn through shoes every few months.

We don't know precisely how many race T-shirts are handed to people who don't want them, but it must be tens if not hundreds of thousands, and it all has an environmental cost. Often a human one, too, with slave, child labour and other unethical practices persisting, especially in the cotton industry. Textile chemicals and dyes pollute waterways on a massive scale, pesticides and insecticides wipe out species and harm workers. Forever chemicals present in some of our kit are linked to fatal diseases. Microfibres released from clothing when washed make their way into the oceans and harm marine life. Almost all our running clothes are made from fossil fuels.

When we finally chuck out that unworn 10K tee, it joins a rubbish truck of textiles thrown into landfill or incinerated (both add significantly to global warming, including methane, which is over 80 times worse than CO_2) every second globally. Polyester fibres take over 200 years to decompose. Oh, and runners do more clothes washing, which means even more CO_2e (tumble dryers are the worst offenders).

The trainer industry creates as much CO_2 as the entire UK

Most shoes produced by the global trainer industry are made using fossil fuels and are resolutely non-recyclable. 'Almost every shoe that's ever been made is still on the Earth,' says Dan Lawson. 'And they will outlive us 10 times over.' And we're encouraged to throw them out after 300 miles before they injure us, although no research backs this myth. It's also hard to separate any meaningful steps to sustainability by companies from the pervasive greenwash. A shoe containing mushroom, algae or a small amount of recycled plastic sounds good, but if it doesn't last it's actually worse for the environment, because more CO_2e is emitted to make a replacement. Two shoes made from durable materials is better environmentally than three pairs made from non-durable 'sustainable materials', research has shown.

Changing what we eat is a simple way to make an impact

Playing the fuel

WHEN IT COMES TO NUTRITION, runners are rightly encouraged to consume extra recovery-supporting protein, but meat and dairy are disastrous for the planet, accounting for 19% of global CO_2e (far more than aviation). A four-year Oxford University study concluded that avoiding meat and dairy is the 'single biggest way' to reduce our impact on Earth, reducing a personal footprint from food by up to 73%. Chuck in animal welfare and diseases linked to meat and I found it easy to go vegan.

Meat is horrifyingly inefficient, with 85% of UK farmland used for feeding and rearing feedstock, yet meat and dairy providing only a third of the calories we consume. Producing 1kg of beef releases 60kg of ghg. Cows and sheep release methane and there's huge water waste, too. A litre of milk needs over 900L of water to produce, while plant-based milks have a third of the CO_2e impact. Chocolate dairy milk used to be my go-to post-run recovery nutrition. Not any more, however.

I'd been frustrated with plastic waste from food and drink, especially gels, water bottles, etc, adding to the global plastic waste crisis. But it's not contributing as much ghg as food waste, 70% of which happens at home. Packaging and where food has come from is usually a small part of its footprint; it's what the food is that counts. Spanish tomatoes have less impact than local beef. And changing diet doesn't mean compromising performance – many athletes excel on plant-based diets.

Travelling light

FOR MOST RUNNERS, however, travel is the biggest slice of an individual carbon footprint. Though the aviation industry isn't as polluting as clothing/shoes or meat/dairy, flying is the most carbon-intensive activity we do. A return flight from London to Berlin produces three times the emissions saved from an average year of recycling. Driving isn't much

Going green

Damian Hall is co-founder of The Green Runners, a group chasing positive change

'The Green Runners have Four Pillars, representing the three areas most runner emissions come from – how you move (travel), how you eat and how you kit up – and also how you speak up. You don't need to go vegan, quit flying or run barefoot to become a Green Runner, you just need to pledge to improve on one of the four pillars. In return you get a Green Runners badge, regular comms and a sense that together we *can* make a difference.' *Join at thegreenrunners.com* better, especially solo. In fact, for journeys longer than 1,000 kilometres, flying actually has a slightly lower carbon footprint than driving alone. Road travel accounts for 15% of global CO_2 emissions.

Public transport is almost always better, with trains usually the lowest-carbon option (aside from running or cycling – unless your pedal power is fuelled by beef, in which case cycling is about as bad as driving). A train instead of a domestic flight reduces a journey's emissions by around 84%, yet only 11% of runners use public transport for races.

Big sports events can cause 'maximum environmental damage', says author and activist George Monbiot. In running, participant travel is the biggest chunk of a race's footprint. Plastic waste is more tangible, emotive and worth addressing, but research shows that over 90% of an event's footprint comes from runners travelling to it. Big city marathons have the same footprint as giving birth to over 30 people and all the emissions they will emit in their lifetimes. Most of which comes from runners flying or driving there. It's a shame that big marathon events are vocal on reducing plastic waste, but unwilling to have a conversation about reducing international participants or improving their travel footprint.

Positive steps

A RUNNER'S EMISSIONS will in most cases be divided into three: travel, diet and kit (including watches, foam rollers, etc). With the potentially large emissions from those areas, we can begin to see how being a runner may add as much as 40% to your footprint, as one study estimated (based on training for a foreign marathon).

When asked what races should do to reduce their environmental footprint, only 8% of runners mentioned public transport ahead of reducing plastic, goodie bags, T-shirts and medals. Yet the biggest thing runners can do to reduce their personal footprint is to travel more responsibly and perhaps a bit less. Sticking mainly to local races, especially those we can cycle (or run?) to, catching a train or carsharing (four in a car is about the same CO_2e emissions per head as the train), can shrink our footprints. A study of a French runner showed he saved nearly three tonnes of CO_2e by swapping the NYC Marathon for a domestic one.

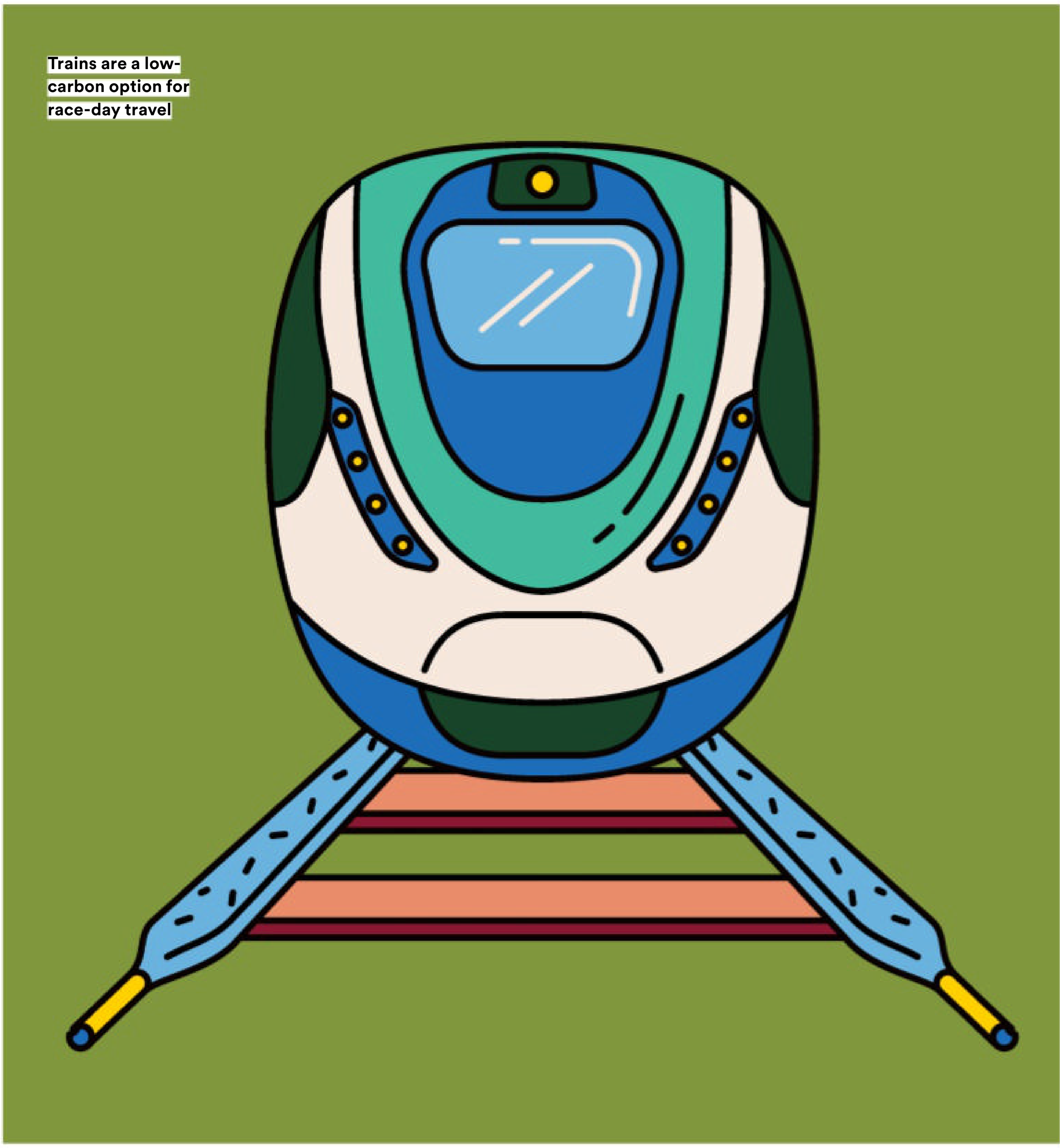
When it comes to food, we don't all need to turn vegan. But collectively, reducing consumption of animal products and eating more plant-based foods would make a huge difference. Just switching from beef and lamb to pork and chicken would have a significant impact, more so if we cut out meat a few times a week. It's likely healthier, too. I know lots of runners who are now flexitarian, mostly vegan or freegan. It's easy, fun and cheaper.

Over 90% of a race's footprint comes from runner travel

Choosing sustainable kit can be confusing with greenwashing and numerous industry 'standards'. Which ethical badges should we look for? Is bamboo more sustainable than recycled polyester? Will a shoe made from tree bark really save the planet? That doesn't matter nearly as much as simply buying less, making it last longer (which may involve occasional needle and thread, and certainly taking shoes beyond 500 miles), showing off patches with pride, cherishing well-loved kit and its associated stories. And when we're finally done with it, passing it on thoughtfully, hopefully to people who can still get some life out of it (via ReRun, for instance). 'The most sustainable kit is the kit we already own,' says Lawson. We need to tell brands they should be designing products that can be recycled, offer repairs, prioritise durability and stop the BS.

I got down about how much my running was contributing to climate breakdown, but we shouldn't feel guilty for existing, of course. Almost none of this is our fault. It was BP who invented the concept of a personal carbon footprint, the idea that individuals are to blame for the climate and ecological emergency, not multibillion-pound corporations plundering the planet. So along with doing what you can in those three areas, you can also be a little bit of an activist. Pushing for systemic changes could have far greater impact than recycling our hummus pots.

At a societal level, try lobbying to remove subsidies on fossil fuels and harmful farming, join climate protests, email your MP



Trains are a low-carbon option for race-day travel

The real prize is in helping to protect our planet

and sign up to online campaigns. Join organisations such as Greenpeace, Protect Our Winters and The Green Runners (see p39). In running, ask events, nutrition and apparel brands to improve, or encourage change in your local running club or race.

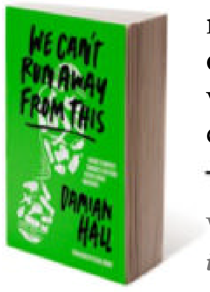
Ask brands why they don't have a sustainability policy, why they haven't calculated their ghg emissions and begun reducing them. Brands who care will be transparent about it.

Race travel is a shared responsibility. Runners need to become better educated on the issue and events can help by incentivising lower-carbon travel. We can ask races why they're not compatible with public transport and if they could provide bike storage or encourage lift sharing. Signing up with Trees Not Tees reduces T-shirt waste. Providing only plant-based nutrition could reduce an event's footprint from food by up to 70%. And ask sports nutrition brands why their plastic packaging isn't recyclable.

Apologies if I've brought a downer to your running. I hope I'm not being preachy. I've made significant changes, but I'm far from perfect. No one is expected to be perfect. But we need progress. Doing something is better than nothing. If you only have five minutes, rather than analysing your own footprint, nudge the system. Talking about climate breakdown is the most effective thing we can do, says Canadian climate scientist and author Professor Katharine Hayhoe.

And let's not forget running is undeniably a good thing. It's not fossil fuel extraction and it's not even one of the worst sports. Runners are healthier than the average person, so less likely to be a burden on the NHS (a huge emitter, unfortunately), even if the same can't be said for physio clinics. We might also consider what we might be doing if we weren't out running (probably something that causes emissions, because most things do).

There are reasons to be hopeful. Many inspiring activists from the running world are driving change, such as Dan Lawson, Jasmin Paris, Kilian Jornet, Clare Gallagher, Trees Not Tees-founder Jim Mann, Rosie Watson and Finlay Wild. In events, apparel and nutrition, there are ethical people making great strides. By joining them and taking our own steps – big or small – towards running with less damage to a liveable planet, our runs can keep us moving towards a brighter future.



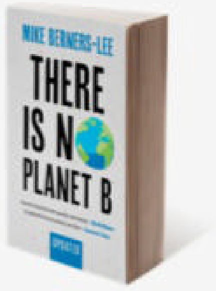
We Can't Run Away From This by Damian Hall is available now at adventurebooks.com

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

Want to know more?

Invaluable info for runners on the climate and ecological crisis

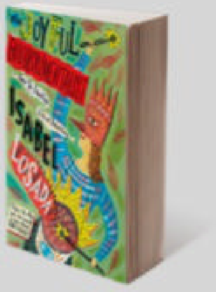
***How Bad Are Bananas?* by Mike Berners-Lee**
The bible for personal footprints (spoiler alert: bananas really aren't that bad).



***There Is No Planet B* by Mike Berners-Lee**
A more societal perspective on the environmental issues we face.

***The Sustainable(ish) Living Guide* by Jen Gale**
Individual, day-to-day stuff, with the idea that none of us are perfect.

***Saving Us* by Katharine Hayhoe**
This read, from the eminent climate scientist, is more hopeful.



***The Joyful Environmentalist* by Isabel Losada**
A book that's doom-free and solution-heavy.

Also see: EcoAthletes, *ecoathletes.org* Champions 4 Earth, *championsforearth.com;* Council for Responsible Sport, *councilforresponsiblesport.org;* Ethical Consumer, *ethicalconsumer.org;* Friends of the Earth, *friendsoftheearth.uk;* Good on You, *goodonyou.eco;* GreenSportsBlog, *greensportsblog.com;* IPCC, *ipcc.ch;* Our Carbon, *ourcarbon.com;* Protect Our Winters UK, *protectourwinters.uk;* Running On Carbon, *runningoncarbon.wordpress.com;* Trees Not Tees, *treesnottees.com*

WORDS:
LAUREN
DEL TURCO

POWER TRAINING CAN HELP YOU MOVE WITH A GAZELLE'S GRACE AND A CHEETAH'S SPEED FOR YEARS TO COME

POWER MOVES

►

YOU KNOW THAT STRENGTH WORK CAN BOOST YOUR PERFORMANCE AND KEEP INJURY AT BAY, BUT ADDING SPEED TO THE MIX BRINGS SOMETHING THAT RAMPS UP THE BENEFITS EXPONENTIALLY: POWER TRAINING

When you think about power in a sporting sense, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Sprinters exploding off their starting blocks? Maybe a middle-distance runner's final burst for the tape coming off that last bend? But the truth is, you don't have to be a pro to reap the rewards of training.

'Power training is essentially overcoming resistance as quickly as possible,' says Mel Herl, performance centre manager for the National Strength and Conditioning Association in the US. This means that working to boost your power is less about what you do and more about how quickly you do it. Instead of teaching your muscles only to get stronger, power work enhances the neuromuscular system, which sends signals from your brain to your muscles so your body can respond to a stimulus and jump into action in a more efficient way, says Herl. When you work on box jumps, for instance, the message passing from your mind to your leg muscles (which propel you up on to the box) gets faster.

As a result, power work improves not only your reaction times but also your balance, coordination and overall performance, says trainer Danyele Wilson, who delivers power workouts on her Instagram account (@danyelewilson). So whether it's making your final push to nail a PB, sidestepping the dog that appears out of nowhere in the park, or avoiding coming a cropper on a kerb as you navigate a pavement, power training prepares your body to respond better in all kinds of situations. And that's just one reason why Wilson refers to developing power as 'training for life'.

Since power training is higher in intensity than standard strength work, you reap cardiovascular endurance benefits, too. Oh, and did we mention it's also incredibly good for your joints? This fiery workout mode puts more of a load on them – as well as on the tendons and ligaments that support them – than other exercise types, which makes them stronger and more stable over time, says Herl. It's little wonder that she calls power-focused sessions 'WD-40 for your body'.

All of these perks appeal at any age, no doubt, but they become increasingly important as we get older, as we tend to lose power more quickly than we lose strength, notes Wilson. In fact, power declines by 7% to 14% per decade in adults, recent research suggests – hence why we can all benefit from some power training. And that's where *RW* comes in. Use this primer to add a little more kapow(er) to your workout routine.

TRAINING TYPES

The methods for developing serious voltage fall into three buckets

1 Plyometrics

Plyometrics challenges the fast-twitch muscle fibres responsible for explosive movements, forcing them to stretch and contract quickly. We're talking explosive jumps, hops and agility moves involving fast feet and direction changes.

2 Ballistic

In plyo, your body leaves the ground; in ballistic work, the focus is moving or launching an object as hard or far as possible, says Wilson. Examples are wall balls (throwing a medicine ball at the wall) and kettlebell swings.

3 Dynamic

This type of power training tweaks your approach to typical strength moves by using a moderate weight – 50% to 60% of your one-rep max – to tap into your intensity. You might lower slowly into a weighted squat and then rocket up.

POWER VS STRENGTH

What's the difference?

Though the concepts seem similar, they're actually quite different. While speed is top priority in anything power-focused, it's not a factor in strength training. The latter is about how much total force you can exert, not how quickly you can exert it, Wilson says.

What this means is that, while power work offers neuromuscular benefits, it can't stimulate your muscles (or bones) to get bigger. Only good old strength training can do that, Herl says. You develop power with low reps, but need something more like 10-plus reps for your body to grow muscle.

It's because of these defining factors that strength and power pair perfectly, though. The more muscle you have, the more fibres your brain can signal to jump or sprint when you train explosively. Think of it as having more horsepower to work with.

Plus, adding power work without a solid strength base first often leads to tendinitis, knee injuries and ankle tweaks. Power may be all about flooring the accelerator, but you need adequate muscle strength to hit the brakes without ending up hurt.

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BEST PRACTICES

Giving your all requires a specific approach. Use these parameters to make sure your effort pays off

1

Keep intensity moderate

Maintain an effort level of 50% to 60% of your max, especially when performing weighted movements, says Wilson. This intensity sweet spot ensures that you can still move with the explosive speed needed to reap some true benefits.

2

Mind your reps

You can't push yourself into fatigue (or bad form) and still develop your power, so Wilson recommends that you stick to about six reps – or roughly 10 seconds of work time.

3

Rest, rest, rest

In order to maintain your peak output, you've also got to take active recovery seriously. A work-to-rest ratio of one to five ensures that you can bounce back. For example, if you work for 10 seconds, rest for 50.

REALITY CHECK

Not feeling sore post-power workout? Don't be alarmed. 'You'll be dog-tired, but your muscles won't be sore,' says Herl.

WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

Power training is increasingly popular, but there's still some misunderstanding about it. Let us guide you...

Not all trainers programme power properly. If a coach has you doing 15 box jumps or a minute of ball slams in a class (or in a personal training session) and calls it 'power work', be sceptical. If you do any move for much longer than six to 10 seconds, it's just 'fancy cardio', Herl says. It's not necessarily bad – these longer bouts of effort can boost your endurance – but this approach won't add extra oomph to your take-off or explosive speed to your dash for the finish line.

Then there's the misconception that power training has to look fancy. 'People see someone jump five hurdles before getting to a box jump and hop around like a bunny rabbit on Instagram, but it's just too much,' Herl says. The complicated stuff definitely looks cool, but it's not necessary (or even advisable) for beginners. Simple body-weight movements – such as skipping or lateral shuffles – are your best bets to see results and, importantly, avoid injury from the start.

FIND YOUR POWER

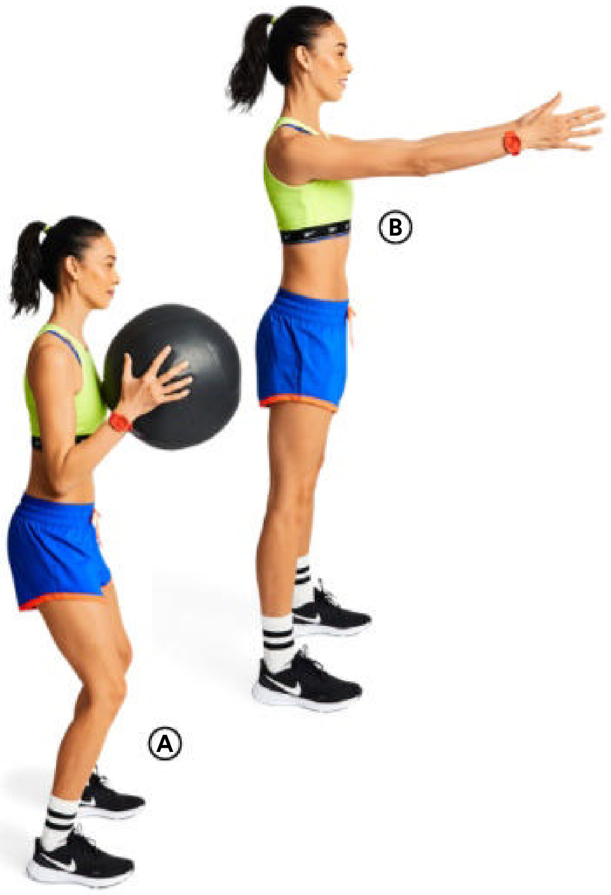
FOR YOUR UPPER BODY

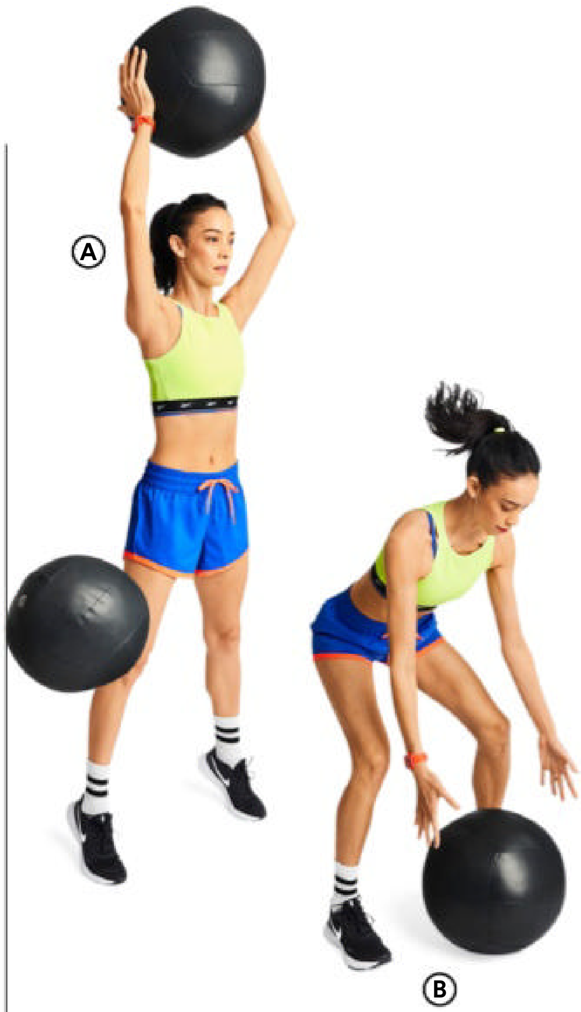
Pick four of these moves – two upper body and two lower body. Then, perform three sets of six reps of each, resting for one minute after each set, then continue to the next

MED BALL CHEST PASS

A / Stand a few feet away from a wall, facing it with your knees slightly bent and your hands holding a medicine ball at chest height.

B / Engage your chest muscles to explosively throw the ball against the wall. Catch it on the rebound and reset. That's 1 rep.





MED BALL SLAM

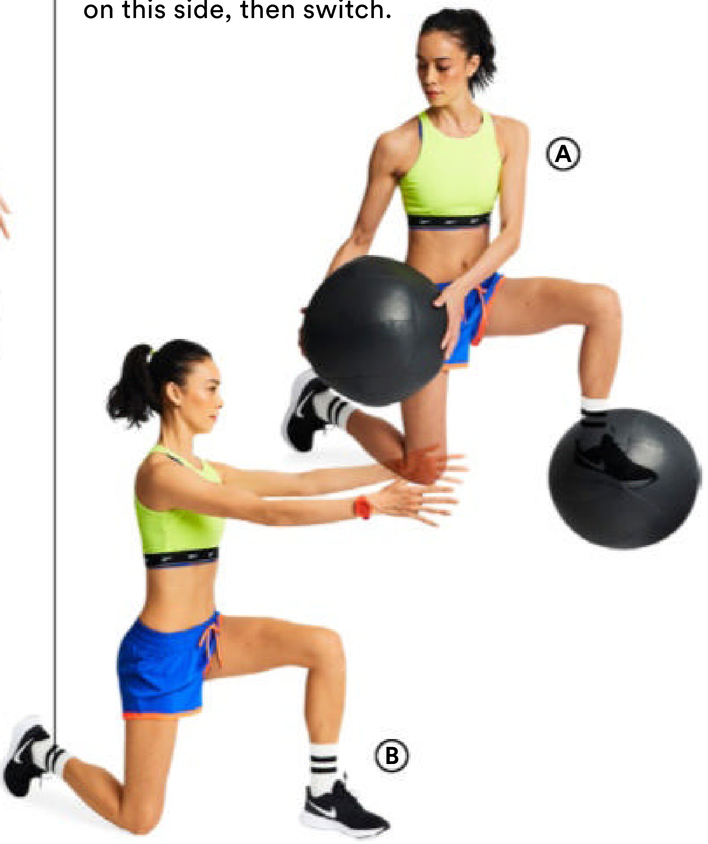
A / Stand with a medicine ball between your feet. Squat to pick up the ball, then pull it up and press it overhead, rising on to the balls of your feet.

B / From here, slam the ball down to the floor. That's 1 rep.

MED BALL ROTATIONAL TOSS

A / Start in a half-kneeling position with your left foot forward and the wall a couple of feet to the left. Hold the medicine ball outside your right hip.

B / Explosively rotate through your core to throw the ball at the wall. Catch it on the rebound, then reset. That's 1 rep. Continue on this side, then switch.

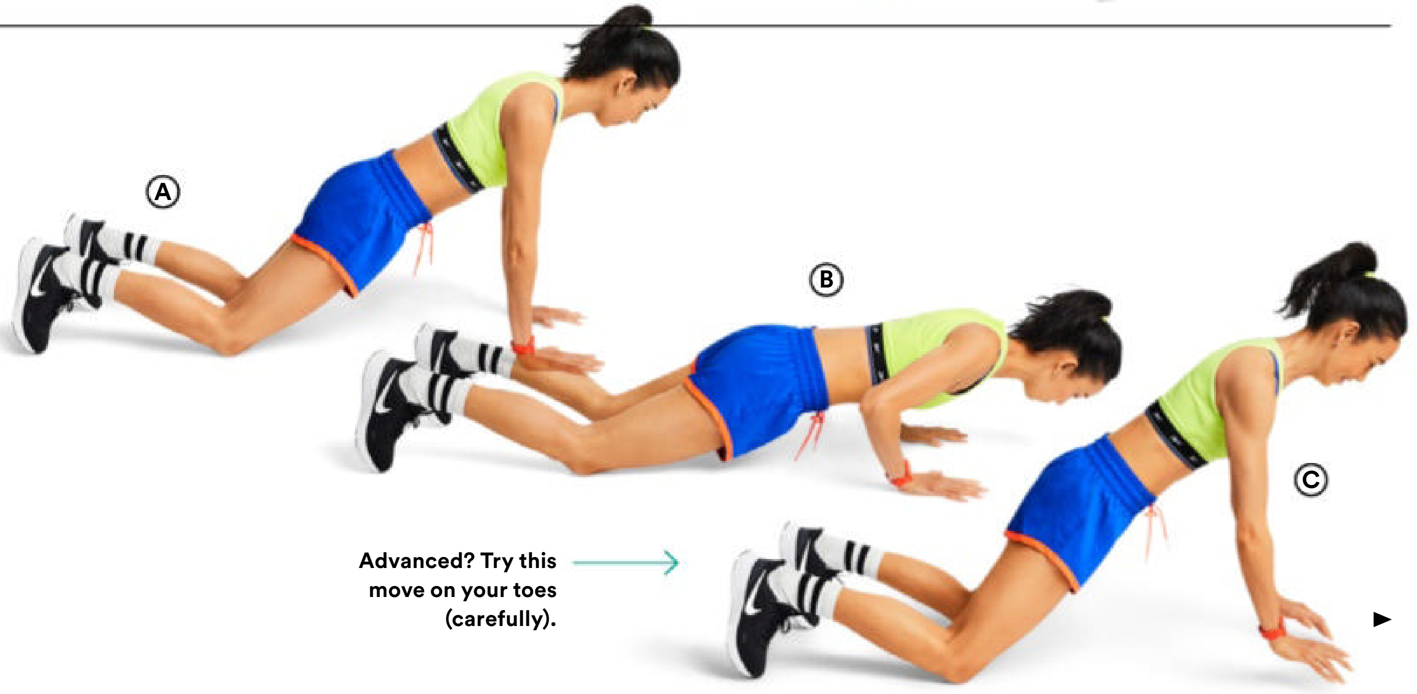


PLYO PRESS-UP FROM KNEES

A / Start in a knee plank, keeping your spine straight.

B / Then bend your elbows to lower your chest.

C / Press up explosively so that your hands lift off the floor at the top of the press-up. Return to the start. That's 1 rep.



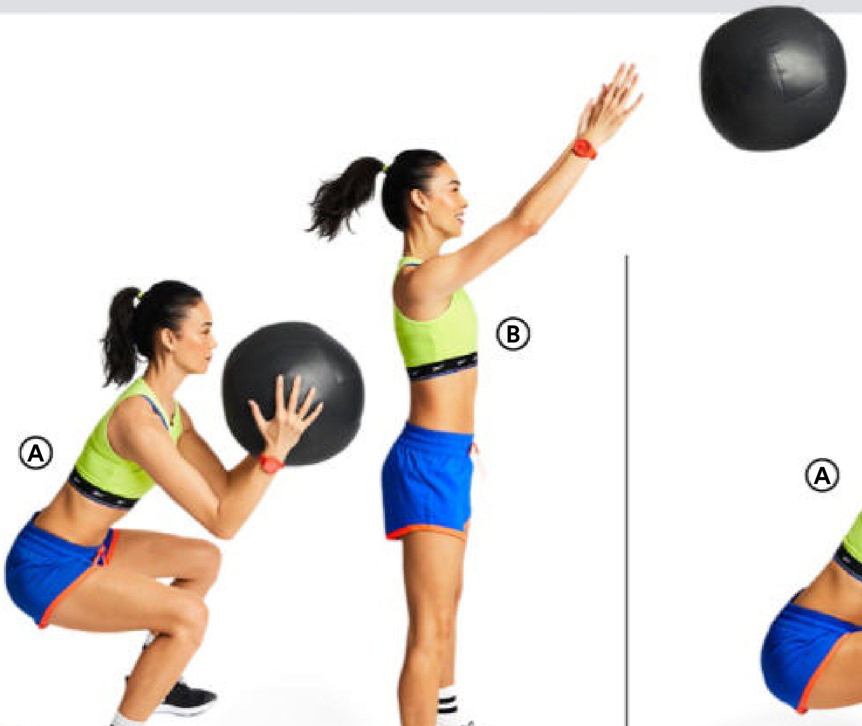
Advanced? Try this move on your toes (carefully).

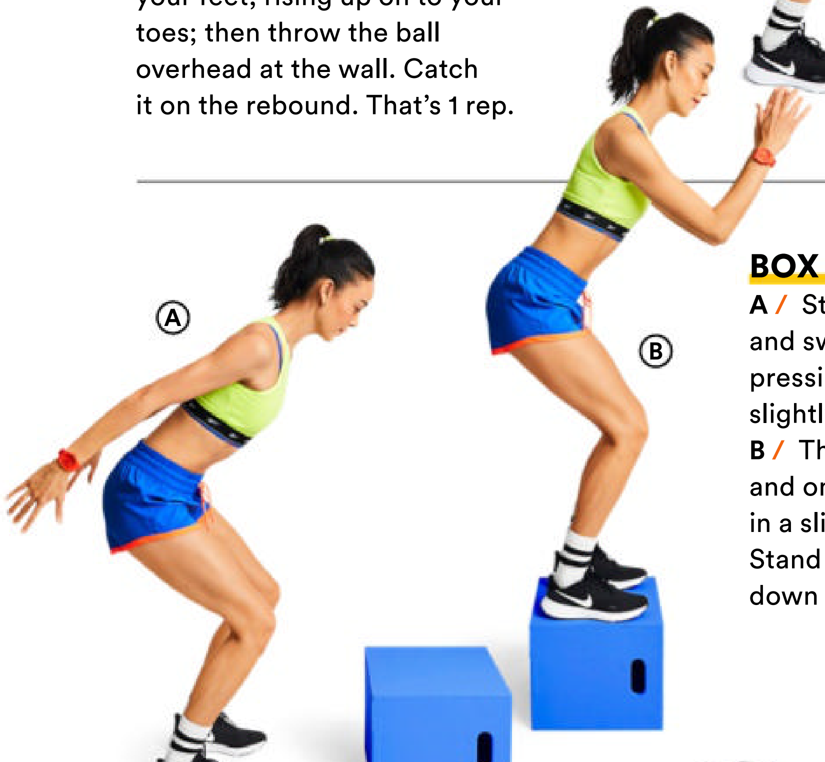
►

FOR YOUR
LOWER BODY

WALL BALL

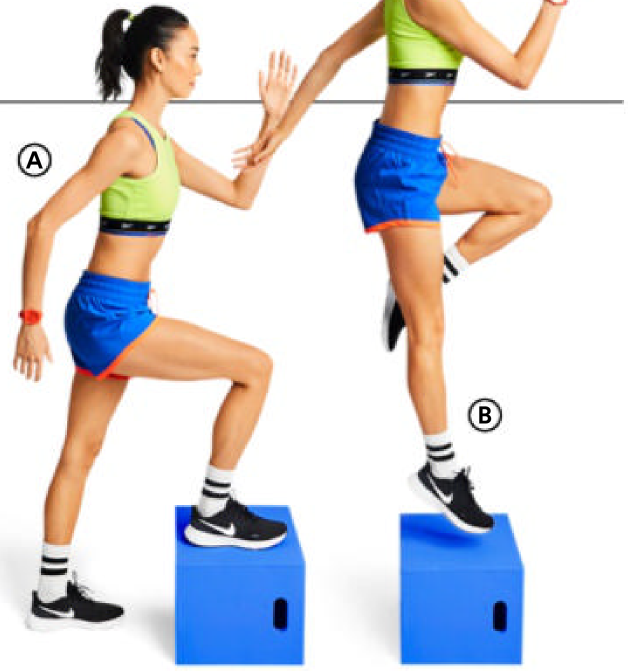
A / Stand a couple of feet from a wall, facing it with your feet slightly wider than your hips and the ball in your hands. Drop into a squat and lift the ball in front of your face.
B / Explosively push through your feet, rising up on to your toes; then throw the ball overhead at the wall. Catch it on the rebound. That's 1 rep.





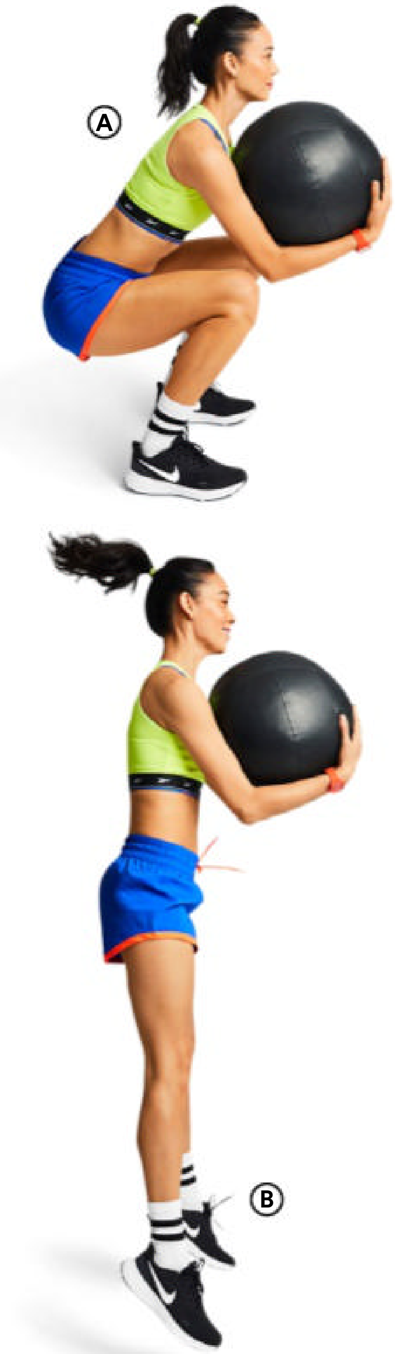
BOX JUMP

A / Stand facing a box and swing your arms back, pressing your hips down slightly to prepare.
B / Then jump off the floor and on to the box, landing in a slight squat position. Stand up tall, then step down carefully. That's 1 rep.



POWER STEP-UP

A / Stand facing a box with your right foot on it and your left arm raised as if you were running.
B / Push through your right foot to jump up, simultaneously driving your left knee to hip height and swinging your right arm forwards. Land softly and return to the start. That's 1 rep. Continue on this side, then switch sides.



MED BALL SQUAT JUMP

A / Stand with your feet hip-width apart, hug a medicine ball to your chest and drop into a squat.
B / Then forcefully extend back up and push off the floor. Land softly. That's 1 rep.

WATTS UP?

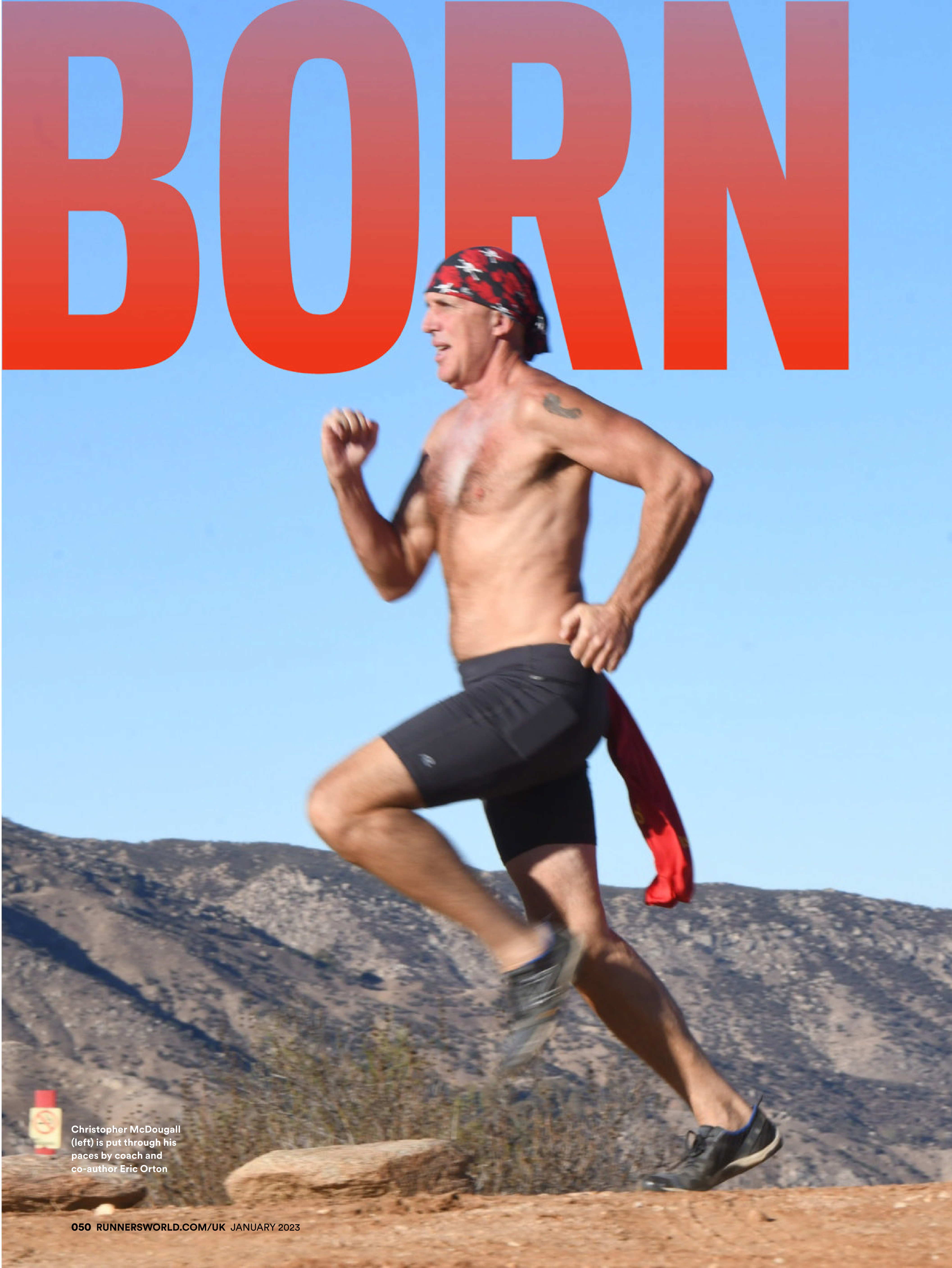
If you're cross-training on a rower, bike or other type of machine, pay attention to the watts measurement on the display. Though various types of equipment are calibrated differently, it's the best way to understand your power output, Wilson and Herl agree. Find your baseline power threshold by noting your peak watts during a 10-second all-out effort. Repeat this monthly as you train and watch that threshold go up. Even if the equipment isn't 100% accurate, it's consistent, so you can track your progress – and pat yourself on the back as you improve.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ALLIE HOLLOWAY. HAIR: CEE RUZZIELLE. MAKE-UP: JENNIFER NAM. MODEL: JACKIE AITKEN/WILHELMINA.
MODEL WEARS: SPORTS BRA AND SHORTS, REEBOK; TRAINERS, NIKE; EARRINGS, TULESTE; WATCH, ADIDAS; SOCKS, BOMBAS

2

THE NUMBER OF POWER SESSIONS PER WEEK TO START WITH

BORN



Christopher McDougall (left) is put through his paces by coach and co-author Eric Orton

AGAIN

RUNNING CONVERSATION
CHRISTOPHER McDOUGALL

As *Born To Run 2* hits the shelves, author Christopher McDougall talks to *RW* about the evolution of the revolution

INTERVIEW:
RICK PEARSON
AND BEN HOBSON

►

BACK IN 2009, THERE WAS REVOLUTION IN THE AIR...

...or perhaps more accurately on the ground. Christopher McDougall's seminal book, *Born To Run*, inspired a movement that radically reassessed the way we run through the lens of our evolutionary heritage. The book inspired millions not just to run, but to run differently, and it holds a special place in many runners' hearts, even if their Vibram FiveFingers have lost the prime spot in the shoe rack. All that makes the recently released sequel a pretty big deal in the running world, so what can we expect from *Born To Run 2*? We caught up with the author to find out.

RUNNER'S WORLD *Born To Run* was one of the biggest books in running history. What made you want to revisit it?

CHRISTOPHER McDOUGALL 'I wasn't ever planning to do *Born To Run 2* – to me, that was a one-off adventure and I felt the curtain dropped at just the right point. I never intended to circle back, but I did for two reasons. I'd actually set out to write a different book, titled *King Of The Weekend Warriors*. I was writing it because I was disturbed by the "no pain, no gain" and "run yourself into hospital" mentality that has been spreading through running. I call it the David Goggins effect – you know, you've got to destroy your kidneys or you haven't really tried your hardest. It's completely the wrong message to associate with running. So much of running is, unfortunately, associated with this idea that if you're not uncomfortable, you're not doing it right.

So I started to write *King Of The Weekend Warriors,* in which I focused on people I know who are high-performing, skilled and accomplished athletes, but who go about it with this complete sense of joy, fun and camaraderie. Then, after about two years of work, I realised I wasn't writing it because I wanted to tell a story; I was writing it because I wanted to win an argument. All I was really trying to do was tell Goggins, "Dude, you're wrong." That's just such a sour way to present a book, and I felt it infecting what I was writing. So I hit pause and asked myself, "What is the opposite kind of book you can write?" It's about sharing something you truly believe that people really want to know, and that's when the second thing dawned on me: I've been getting requests for advice ever since *Born To Run* came out. I would say I've had in the hundreds of thousands of requests from people asking me for advice and I never give it because I'm not that guy – I'm not a coach, I'm not a physiologist, I don't know how to fix your injuries. Then it finally got through to my head that I know those people, so why not write a book that taps into that knowledge?'

RW How would you describe *Born To Run 2*?

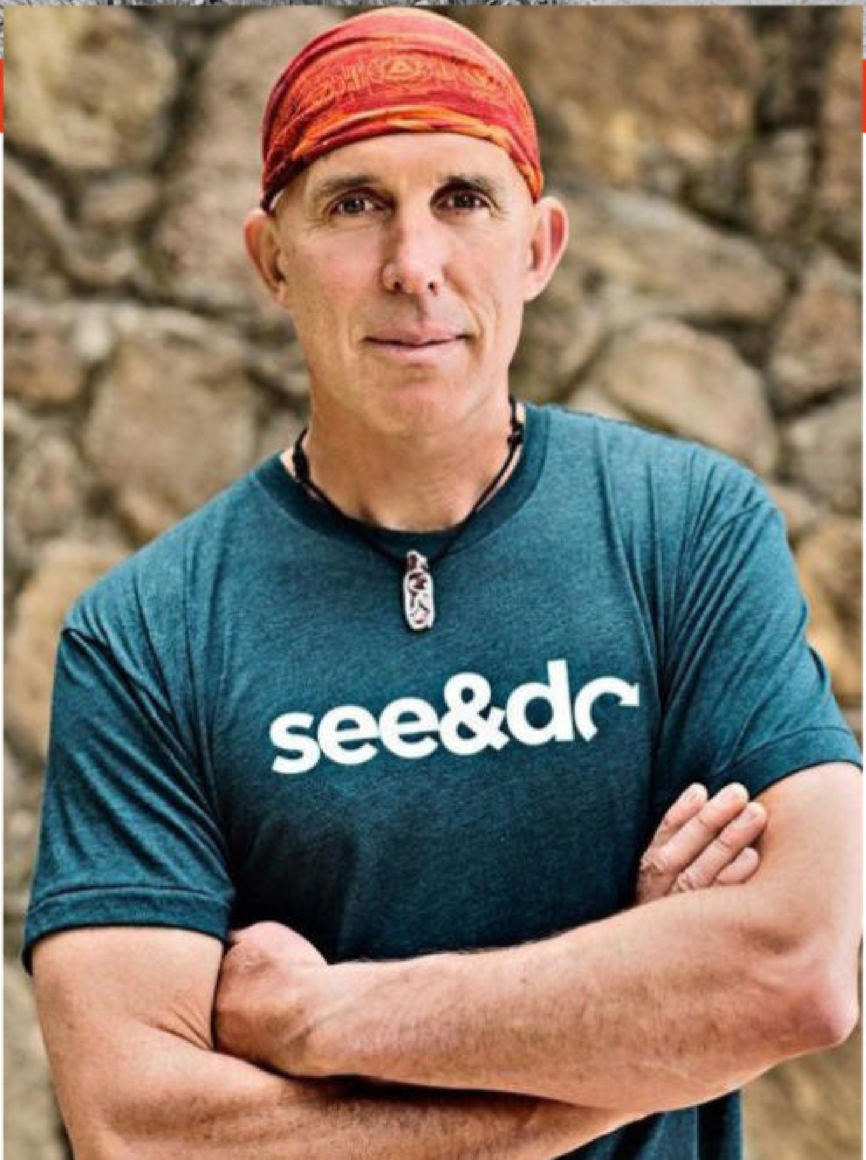
CM 'I look at it as everything that wasn't in *Born To Run* is in *Born To Run 2*. There were two things I felt constricted by in *Born To Run*. Number one was that there are all these great stories and dramas in our sport, but you can only include so many; I wanted to include all the stories I thought were great, but I couldn't fit in the first book.

The second thing was that at the time I researched and wrote *Born To Run*, I was new to the sport and really wasn't positive that any of this stuff worked. When I talked about minimalist running, it was a case of, "Okay, I think this stuff works, let's see..." And it hit me that nearly 15 years later, it's working! So I could return to the training advice that after 15 years of putting it into practice I now know for certain genuinely works.'

> **'IT'S ABOUT SHARING SOMETHING YOU TRULY BELIEVE'**

RW Do you think any of the messages in the original *Born To Run* have been misunderstood or misrepresented? And is part of *Born To Run 2* about addressing this?

CM 'One of the big surprises to me with *Born To Run* was that people suddenly started to buy Vibram FiveFingers like crazy. I thought that was surprising because the only person in the book who actually wears these shoes is Barefoot Ted and he's the wackiest dude in there. So it was interesting that of all the advice people could take, they zeroed in on Barefoot Ted. That was the one thing I think was interpreted differently than I would have expected – this sense that you can buy a product and that's going to solve everything. Or you can just take your shoes off and that's going to solve everything. Because in the



McDougall (left) and Orton (above) have a special rapport which was key to creating *Born To Run 2*

book, I don't run barefoot at all. Eric Orton [co-author and long-term collaborator] specifically tells me, you can either train for a 50-mile race or you can radically transform your running form.'

RW **How did Eric influence the new book?**
CM 'The idea I had was I wanted the book to cover all the aspects that he and I had been discussing for years. Our belief is that unfortunately we reduce running to an interruption in our lives – it's that 45 minutes we carve out five days a week, then we go about the rest of our lives. But ancestrally, evolutionarily, running was woven into all aspects of our lives. It's a tall order to suggest people do the same thing now because obviously we have lots of other things going on, but we believe that there are these seven ancestorial sources of energy that we can all still tap into to make our running feel better – to enjoy it more and get better at it. So I called him and said, "Let's do this book and look at what we call the free seven." We've been having a conversation about the free seven for 15 years now and on that initial phone call, in just 45 minutes, we sketched out the entire book. I'd only called him to say, "Maybe you and I can work on the form and fitness section and we'll find someone else for footwear and someone else for food," and so on, but we realised that we've accumulated such an archive of information that in one 45-minute phone call we had the outline of the book all sketched out.'

RW **Is this long-term relationship the key to getting the right balance in the new book?**
CM 'The reason why Eric and I work so well together is because he's so knowledgeable and disciplined as an athlete and I'm so limited in my attention span that I'll push back. He'll say, "These 15 exercises are crucial for foot strength," and I'll say, "Dude, there's no way I'm doing 15; you better boil it down to maybe three." So between us, we have that push and pull.

I think often when your coach tells you to do something, you pretend you're going to do it, then you secretly don't. But Eric and I have enough of a rapport that he can tell me to do something and I can call it and say, "No, I'm never going to do that. Give me something else." I know he's right, but I also know that, like a lot of people, if something is too unpleasant, after two weeks I'll never do it again. So with foot strength we recognised that what we call the foot core is crucial, but he came up with these simple exercises.

Here's one: in the morning, when you're heating coffee, all you have to do is stand on one foot. Get up on the forefoot of one foot and let the other hang loose. Just try to ►

balance for a minute or two on each foot while you're waiting for the kettle to boil. You can do it for less than five minutes and it'll activate not only all the muscles in your foot, but all the way up your chain as you're fighting for balance. It's a great way to reawaken the system before you've even had a sip of coffee.'

RW Has your opinion on running footwear changed over the last 15 years, or are you still a minimalist man?

CM 'I think I'm more radical and extreme than even Eric is. The reason behind that is an interesting experience I had while working on *Born To Run*. I was in the UK for a conference on fascia and I started to get what felt like plantar fasciitis, but I thought, that's impossible, I'm a minimalist runner and my form is now perfect, so the theory is I should not have plantar fasciitis, what's going on? Then a friend suggested I talk to Lee Saxby.

At that time, Lee was quite an unknown, doing fitness and boxing training in a little gym in the basement of a small hotel – he was literally an underground footwear expert. So I turned up unannounced at this little gym, explained why I was there and told him the reason I wear these minimalist shoes is because I'm a minimalist runner. He looked at my shoes and said, "Those are like sofa cushions; those aren't minimalist." He made me take the shoes off and run barefoot outside. Then he said, "Okay, now throw those shoes in the rubbish and run back to your hotel." I think it was about 3km back to my hotel and I said, "Really? Run through downtown London barefoot?" He said, "I would if I were you."

> **'THE KEY IS TO BRING BACK THAT SENSE OF COMMUNITY'**

So I took his advice and did it, and the pain went away. And it was such a lightning bolt moment for me. First, I realised I was so capable of backsliding. The shoe I was wearing was not radically cushioned, but it was enough for my form to degenerate and for me not to notice. I had started to overstride and heel strike and I didn't realise. The second thing I realised was that changing behaviour could change the outcome so dramatically. So I became the footwear equivalent of a reformed drinker – I can't feel a drop of cushioning or my form will go to crap.

Eric runs in the Teton mountains and likes a little more cushioning underfoot. In the new book, we compromise and recommend the Altra Escalante – which to me is way too much shoe, but Eric feels is a great transitional shoe.'

RW Is it safe to assume you have no time for the current maximal trend?

CM 'I think we have to understand that footwear is a sensual pleasure. Putting a different pair of shoes on your feet is like having a different meal for lunch or dinner. We don't want to eat porridge three times a day every day; we want to experience something different. So I totally get it. I have a much broader variety of shoes than I need because it feels good. If I wear a Xero Shoes sandal and then the next day I put on, say the New Balance Minimus, that transition, that new sensation, feels good. It can make your run more enjoyable so I understand the pleasure factor of a nice-feeling shoe.

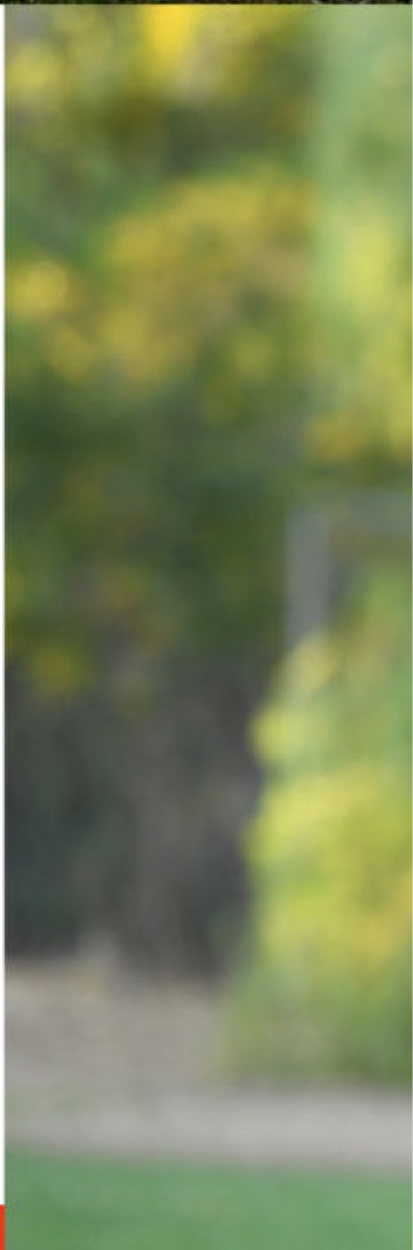
However, for me, this constant bombardment of new stuff takes away from the real message, which is the craft, the skill, of running. If you go to a martial arts gym, they're not loading you up with carbon fibre or cushioning – it's very minimalist, very bare. If you walk into a ballet studio, again, it's very minimalist. The idea is to start with nothing, master your body's performance, and only add implements as necessary.'

RW You champion the Tarahumara diet in the original *Born To Run*. What nutritional approach is recommended in the new book?

CM 'The real revelation to me in that area came with *Natural Born Heroes*, the book I wrote after *Born To Run*. It presented a kind of dichotomy for me because in *Born To Run*, I was down with the Tarahumara, who are by necessity largely vegetarian, living on a diet of mostly home-grown squash and corn. And the first ultrarunner I met, Scott Jurek, has a very disciplined vegan diet. So for *Born To Run*, my thinking was that this seems to work – people who eat real foods, mostly vegetables, tend to do very well.

Then I became aware of these resistance fighters during the Second World War who were pulling off these extraordinary physical feats on the island of Crete. They were living 60 miles up in the mountains, running 60 miles down to the coast, fighting the Nazis, stealing their weapons and then running 60 miles back up into the mountains. These guys were doing a 120-mile ultramarathon with some mixed martial arts in the middle. What were they fuelling themselves on? So I went to Crete to check out what they ate and it turns out that their diet was radically different and was largely meat-based.

I was trying to figure out the connection between the two approaches and what it essentially comes down to is the glycaemic index. What foods are jacking up your insulin rates? What foods have that fast burn? So where we land in *Born To Run 2* is a very simple, feeling-based orientation



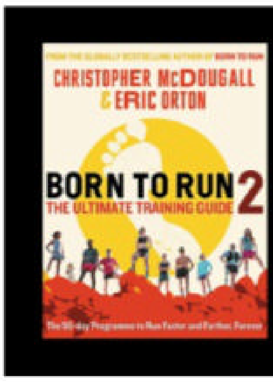
McDougall (above) credits the success of his long-term collaboration with Eric Orton (right) to their 'push and pull' instincts for diet. In the two-week test, you eliminate all high-glycaemic foods for 14 days – pasta, rice, breads, sugar, anything that will be a fast-burn food. You eat things such as salmon, meat if you like to eat meat, tofu if you don't – all the low-burn foods. Then after two weeks you gradually reintroduce some of the high-glycaemic foods. After two weeks of no rice, you have a little rice, wait an hour and see how you feel. If you feel fine, good, your body can tolerate half a cup of rice. Then try a full cup of rice and see how you feel. If you feel sluggish, bloated, then that's your limit. What we try to do in *Born To Run 2* is make everything very feeling-based, so you can tell by your own body's reaction how you react to footwear and food as well.'

RW It seems that simplicity and the pursuit of what feels natural are recurring themes in your work.
CM 'What's interesting is that all the things I become interested in, such as footwear, diet or running form, are things that have really long, deep roots – great long ancestral pedigree. The shoes that Barefoot Ted recommends, which I also feel are great shoes, those very basic sandals have a 10,000-year CV. Greek warriors wore them, Roman centurions wore them, the Tarahumara wear them and minimalist runners today wear them. The same is true of the eating plan we suggest in *Born To Run 2* – it's basically the Mediterranean diet. This is a healthy eating system that has been pursued by the healthiest people in the world for thousands of years.'

RW What type of runner would you say this book is for?
CM 'We were aiming the dart right in the centre for everyone and we had a really instructive moment by accident. Eric and I were dedicated to having pictures in the book that show the diversity of running that's often not visible – lots of different people, lots of different body types. We ended up doing the photos before the final text and we got a bunch of people together for the photoshoot, the majority of whom are very accomplished runners. But when we were putting them through some exercises for the purposes of illustrations for the book, we realised they were struggling. One elite half marathon runner's glutes were so completely deactivated she couldn't do the glute exercises. And what we realised is that no matter how successful a runner is, they're usually deficient in something. Essentially, every runner has a potential catastrophe waiting to happen if they don't look at their whole, universal approach. So we were aiming to thread the needle where we can do a reboot for every kind of runner: if you're a beginner just starting out, this is perfect; if you're a veteran with a nagging achilles pain you can't figure out, this is perfect; or if you've plateaued, so you're not getting faster or going longer, you're just kind of muddling along in the middle, the idea is this could bring you back to a kind of factory preset and you can then build up from there.'

RW Is part of that reset a change in attitude and approach in a more general sense?
CM 'There are two things that we've adopted as part of running: one is it being solitary and another is accepting pain as the price of admission. But when you look back at our ancestors, neither of these were ever a part of how humans ran. You would never go off into the wilderness by yourself – if you did, you didn't come back. Ancestrally, we always ran as a group. And you would never drain your energy tank unless absolutely necessary because our legs were the only thing we could rely on for survival. If you went out and ran your hardest for an hour and then trouble arose and you were all out of energy, that was it, you were done. So ancestrally, the way we ran was in a group and always within our aerobic threshold. We kept our heart rates low, our effort moderate, and we ran communally.

Unfortunately, that's kind of gone, but when you return to it, it's very powerful. You see the success of parkrun – when we reintroduced the aspect of showing up in a group with a smile on your face, people loved it. In the US, we're seeing a lot of groups springing up where running is based around neighbourhood and community, and they're mushrooming really quickly. What we recommend is embracing the comfort and fun of running, and that anything you can do to run with another living creature – be it a person or a dog – will benefit your running. The key is bringing back that sense of joy and community. If you have those two elements, you'll go a long way to accomplishing whatever you want from your running.'



Born To Run 2: The Ultimate Training Guide (£19.99, Profile Books) by Christopher McDougall and Eric Orton is out now

50 YEARS OF THE SWOOSH

TO MARK NIKE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY, WE LOOK AT THE BRAND'S JOURNEY FROM BACK-OF-A-VAN TO GLOBAL BEHEMOTH, AND HOW ITS TECHNICAL INNOVATION AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE HAVE SHAPED THE RUNNING WORLD

WORDS:
KATE CARTER

⟶

NIKE
NIKE

FIFTY YEARS AFTER THE BIRTH OF NIKE, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE THE RUNNING WORLD WITHOUT IT.

From record-breaking shoes to Olympic kit, via running crews and online ads, the swoosh is everywhere. And yet, implausible though it now seems, the Nike story began, unpromisingly, with a piece of college homework.

In 1962, former college runner Phil Knight, finishing his MBA at Stanford, handed in a thesis on Japanese shoe companies being poised to enter the US. It's not an obvious eureka moment. The Second World War is a fresh memory, and hostility to Japan lingers. So when Knight decided to pack a rucksack, fly to Japan and persuade a shoe company to let him import its shoes, it must have seemed like lunacy.

That, though, was the beginning of Nike, or rather of its precursor, Blue Ribbon Sports. Importing 'athletic' shoes from Onitsuka (later to become Asics), Knight sold them not with the slick campaigns and celebrity endorsements that would later follow, but from the back of his car, bankrolled by money borrowed from his exasperated dad.

But if Knight's self-proclaimed 'crazy idea' seemed foolhardy to most, it didn't to Bill Bowerman. The legendary coach had put Knight through his training paces on the University of Oregon track team, and Knight knew about his obsession with running shoes all too well. 'Bowerman was constantly sneaking into our lockers and stealing our footwear,' Knight recalls in his autobiography, *Shoe Dog*. 'He'd spend days tearing them apart, stitching them back up, then hand them back with some minor modification, which made us either run like deer or bleed. Regardless of the results, he never stopped… He always had some new design, some new scheme to make our shoe sleeker, softer, lighter.'

It's now 50 years since Blue Ribbon became Nike, yet that description – with its obsessive attention to detail – could have been written today. Bowerman was a design innovator – and a whole lot more besides. In 1967, he published a slim, rather unpromising-sounding volume titled *Jogging*. Its fundamental message was simple: if you have a body, you are an athlete. It sold millions. Before long, in Knight's words, 'Running was no longer just for weirdos. It was no longer a cult. It was almost – cool?'

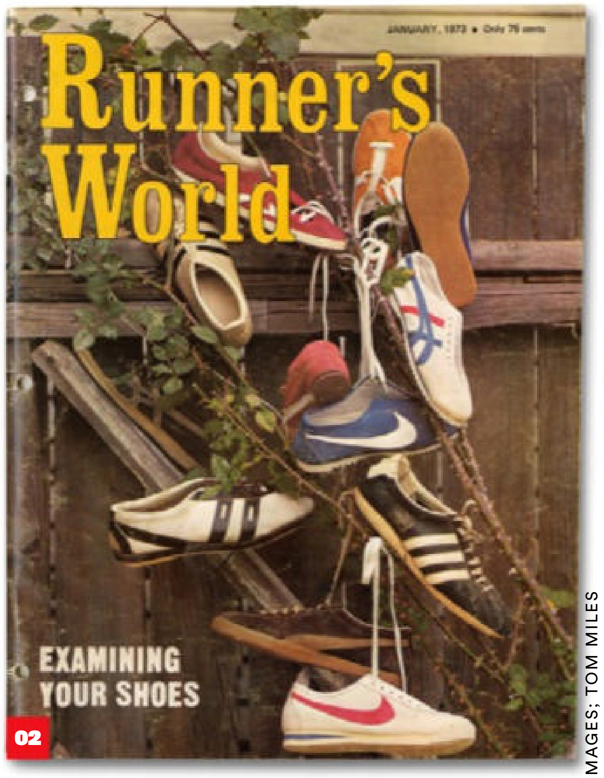
THE BIRTH OF THE COOL

'Almost cool' soon became 'very cool', in large part thanks to a kitchen gadget. At breakfast one morning in 1971, Bowerman was mulling over the perfect balance of spring and grip. He found his gaze drifting over to the grid pattern on his kitchen's waffle iron, so he took it to the garage and filled it with some toxic chemical mix – and promptly destroyed it. But Bowerman was not the type of man to quit. Several experiments later, he had come up with his sole-shaped waffle design. He sewed it on to a pair of running shoes and gave it to one of his runners, who ran like the wind.

And so the Waffle trainer was born – later nicknamed the 'Moon Shoe' because the footprints it left behind resembled those left on the soil of the moon by Apollo 11 astronauts. Twelve pairs of the prototype were initially made for runners at the 1972 Olympic trials, but just a year later, a more refined commercial version was released. By 1974, it had built a reputation as America's favourite training shoe. Such is its remarkable status in running history, that in 2019, an unworn pair of those first prototype Waffles sold for nearly $500,000 at auction.

But the Waffle isn't just another footnote in running history – it was also one of the first pieces of athletic wear to cross from function to fashion. 'It didn't just feel different or fit different – it looked different. Radically so,' recalled Knight. And then, his innate marketing genius spotted something that was set to change Nike's fortunes forever. 'Watching that shoe evolve… from popular accessory to cultural artefact, I had a thought: people might start wearing this thing to class. And to the office. And the grocery store. And throughout their everyday lives…'

And so Knight gave the order: factories were to start making the trainer in blue, which would go better with jeans. Such a simple idea, so obvious in retrospect. But arguably, that is the moment when running gear as fashion really began. Soon



01/ Nike co-founder Bill Bowerman designed the prototype for the Waffle trainers in his garage

02/ The blue Waffle trainer pictured on the January 1973 *RW* cover

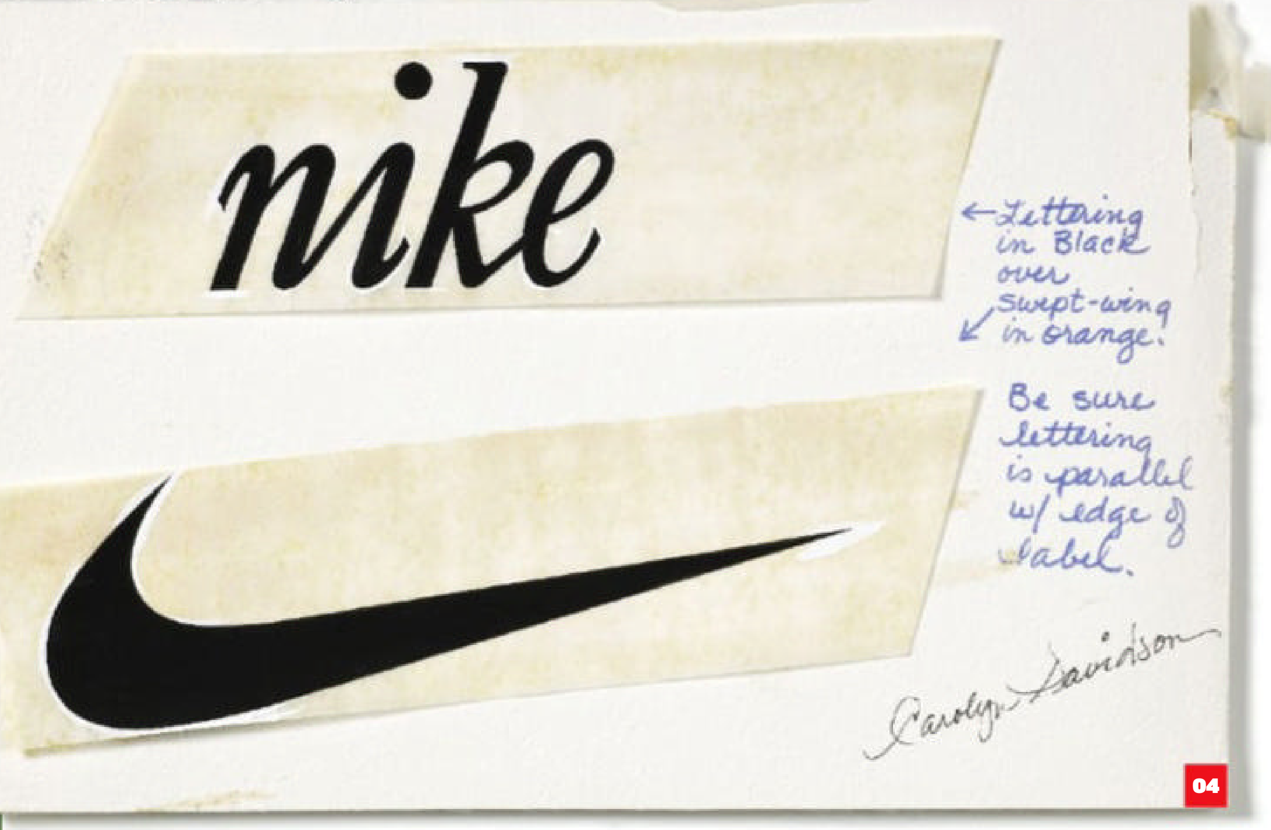
03/ Bowerman with his unique sole-shaped waffle design

04/ The original Nike swoosh designed by Carolyn Davidson

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF NIKE; JONATHON KAMBOURIS; GETTY IMAGES; TOM MILES

160 MILLION

The number of Nike Air Pegasus sold since its 1983 debut.



← Lettering in Black over swept-wing in orange.

Be sure lettering is parallel w/ edge of label.

Carolyn Davidson

04

03

after, Hollywood superstar Farrah Fawcett was pictured skateboarding in a pair of Nike Cortez – one of the new Nike shoes 'providing advanced shock absorption at the heel'. What Fawcett wore was instantly fashionable – and Nike became a household name.

AIR TO THE THRONE

The Waffle's design, with a unique outsole combining grip and bounce, was a step change in running shoe design. Not long after, another game changer arrived. In 1979, Nike released the Tailwind, advertised as 'the shoe with air – captured in the permanently inflated midsole channels'. Developed by a former Nasa engineer, Marion Frank Rudy, the Air technology replaced traditional EVA soles with gas-filled pouches. Unlike in the now-familiar Nike Air shoes, those pouches or bubbles were not designed to be visible to the outside eye – that idea came with the Nike Air Max 1 in the 1980s. But it was with the Tailwind that this new cushioning concept was born.

The Tailwind – which runners loved, but which suffered some technical setbacks – led to super-light marathon shoe the Eagle, and in 1981 to the Mariah, the first racing shoe featuring the 'Air-Sole: channels of pressurised gas… encapsulated within a polycushion midsole, providing a cushion of "air" which absorbs and redistributes the energy generated with every foot strike.'

Although the Mariah and its technology was a hit, it was one within a limited market of serious road racers. Racers and the fashion-forward might be happy – but with the running boom showing no signs of slowing, a mass-market shoe was clearly needed. So, in 1982, the Nike catalogue offered a new design, priced at $50, intended to work for as broad a range of runners as possible. This new shoe featured an 'Air Wedge' in the heel, a unit that 'improves shock absorption by 12% over an EVA wedge', where your everyday runner needed it most. The name of the shoe? The Pegasus.

Four decades later, the Pegasus remains a stalwart of Nike's running stable, routinely selling more than some of Nike's competitors' entire lines. Since its introduction, more than 160 million pairs of the workhorse with wings have flown around the world. While other shoes have ▶

come and gone, offering more speed, more cushioning or a more barefoot feel, the Pegasus has remained a favourite for generations of runners, not least for its longevity on the road. As the first Pegasus ad put it, 'Never will so many own so much for so little.'

THE X-FACTOR

Technological innovation in running – always looking for something faster, bouncier, more responsive – was woven into Nike's DNA by Bowerman himself. But Nike's genius has always been to combine innovation with sometimes provocative marketing – and to work with some of the biggest names in running. Of course, since baseball players appeared on cigarette cards in the late 19th century, companies have been signing cheques to athletes for their endorsements, so no one would claim that Nike invented athlete sponsorship. But that the brand has redefined that relationship is undeniable.

Oddly enough, Nike's first signing was not a runner but a tennis star – the legendary Romanian Ilie Năstase. But Nike's second athlete was infinitely more significant – Bowerman's star pupil and US track legend, Steve Prefontaine. Though his life was tragically cut short at just 24 years old, 'Pre' is still venerated today, with Knight describing his spirit as the 'cornerstone of this company's soul' and a building named in his honour at Nike's corporate HQ in Oregon. 'Pre preached Nike as gospel,' wrote Knight, 'and brought thousands of new people into our revival tent. He urged everyone to give this groovy new brand a try – even his competitors.' What Pre gave Nike was that most valuable commodity: cool.

From Pre onwards, Nike has also relied on the feedback of its athletes, with designs constantly tweaked to suit their needs and guide its quest for the fastest, most comfortable running shoes. But Nike's relationships with its athletes have also helped to fuel fundamental changes in running. By the late 70s, female athletes were increasingly frustrated with the status quo, with still no distance races for women in the Olympics beyond 1500m. So, in 1979, marathoner and world-record holder Jacqueline Hansen teamed with others – including Nike athlete Joan Benoit – to form the International Runners Committee to lobby for inclusion. Nike threw its weight behind the campaign, running full-page ads in running magazines calling for a women's Olympic marathon. Despite resistance, these efforts paid off, and in 1984, the 3000m was added to the women's programmme at the LA Olympics along with the marathon, which was won by Benoit.

It's easy to be cynical: backing campaigns is a sure way to generate publicity, and no one can ignore Nike's moments of controversy, from criticism of factory conditions in Indonesia to its treatment of signed female athletes through pregnancy. Yet Nike's influence has also helped push through change in running – and in the wider world, too. In 1995, an early 'Just Do It' campaign featured long-distance runner Ric Muñoz running over stunning trails and sharing his weekly mileage and 10 marathons a year. Only at the end is the powerful punch: his HIV-positive status. Aids activists applauded the ad, saying it helped remove some of the disease's stigma.

BACK TO ITS ROOTS

In 1992, Knight told an interviewer, 'From the start, everyone understood that Nike was a running shoe company, and the brand stood for excellence in track and field. It was a very clear message, and Nike was very successful.' Yet by the turn of the millennium,

01

We Own The Night
NIKE
WOMEN'S
10K
LONDON
We Own The Night
NIKE
WOMEN'S
10K

03

THE NIKE STORY

1964

Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman create Blue Ribbon Sports with just $1,200 in the bank, selling shoes from the back of a van.

02
RUN DEM CREW

01/ US track legend Steve Prefontaine, who was once described as the 'cornerstone' of Nike's soul

02/ London's Run Dem Crew, led by Charlie Dark (pictured), is one of the grassroots running crews supported by Nike

03/ Nike's women-only We Own The Night series took place in cities across Europe from 2013 to 2014

Nike was no longer anything as simple as a running shoe company: it was a sporting behemoth, a marketing powerhouse and a global brand. And that shift arguably took them away from the original core market.

Perhaps it was a sense inside Nike of needing to reconnect to those roots that led to a significant investment into grassroots-running activities from the early 2000s. Nike has always been a presence in big elite races, but putting on its own mass-participation races became a much more direct way to talk to, and support, runners. From 2001 to 2008, Nike London races challenged runners to 'Go Nocturnal' or 'Run A Year', while in 2013 to 2014, the all-women We Own the Night series took over European cities.

Nike was able to reach out and connect with runners not just in the real world, but virtually, too, with the launch of the Nike Run Club app in 2010. Such is the reach of the app that there have since been more than 75 million downloads, 1.6 billion runs started and 48 million unique users.

At the same time, Nike was starting to identify and support running crews – new, urban running groups with a more diverse demographic than traditional running clubs. From Run Dem Crew in London to NBRO Running in Copenhagen or Black Roses in New York City, crews attracted runners who hadn't seen themselves represented in the sport before. With a young demographic full of energy, they were also, frankly, a lot cooler, which began to shift the image and perception of grassroots running yet again.

60 MILLION

The number of pairs of Nike Tempo Shorts that have been shipped to women around the world since the early 2000s.

Sponsorship deals come and go, crews, clubs and athletes switch between brands, but Paula Radcliffe's relationship with Nike is one of the most long-standing in sport, and it has given her a deep insight into how the brand works with athletes. The former world marathon record holder signed with Nike in 2000, and in keeping with the company's ethos of involving its elite athletes in the research and development process, from the beginning she was actively involved as a shoe tester.

'Around 2001, 2002, we started working on the Zoom Marathoner,' Radcliffe recalls. 'So I actually got to design my perfect shoe around me. I can't think of one designer who ever made me feel that I couldn't be completely honest. And I've gone back and said, "This is rubbish..." And that feedback would absolutely be taken on board and acted on.'

Those shoes helped Radcliffe break the world record by an astonishing margin at the 2003 London Marathon, clocking 02:15:25 and slicing three minutes off her previous time. It was the epitome of the Nike model: make a shoe perfect for the fastest runner in the world, then filter it down to the mass-participant runner. After all, who doesn't want to run in the fastest shoe in the world?

FOLLOWING THE SCIENCE

Whether you're amateur or elite, performing better is the common goal. And if technology can help us do that, it'll sell. These days, it's common for shoe launches to be studded with facts and figures on how they can improve your economy or reduce fatigue. But way back in 1981, the Nike Mariah was the first shoe to be explicitly marketed using science and lab testing. Indeed, the 1985 Nike catalogue said, 'Tests reveal that running in the Mariah reduces energy expenditure by 2%.'

These days, Nike has its own labs and testing facilities. Tony Bignell has worked at Nike for more than 20 years, including 10 as VP of innovation in footwear. He laughs when he describes Nike's LeBron James Innovation Center, one of the largest sports science research labs in the world. 'This mix of creative dreamers across so many diverse

1972

Blue Ribbon Sports is reborn as Nike, a last-minute decision (Knight's preferred choice, Dimension Six, was vetoed).

1973

Steve Prefontaine joins Nike. He's given $5,000 a year and a business card that reads national director of public affairs.

1974

The Waffle is granted its first US patent, numbered 3,793,750, for its 'improved sole', and 'flat sides' that improve traction.

1979

Nike introduces its patented 'Air' technology with the Tailwind shoes, kicking off cushioning as a design concept.

1980

Nike completes IPO with a price of $22 a share. At time of print, the price stands at approximately $98 (around £83).

1983

Carolyn Davidson, who was paid $35 for her 1971 swoosh design, is given a gold ring and shares of Nike stock, worth $640,000 today. ►

$437,500

The amount (around £383,803) an original pair of 'Moon Shoes' sold for at Sotheby's New York on 23 July 2019. These are the most expensive trainers ever sold at auction.

01

04

05

disciplines – behavioural scientists, materials experts, engineers, designers – are focused on the singular goal of listening to and serving our athletes. When their individual excellence comes together as one, that's when the magic of Nike happens.

'The beauty, I think, is when you can pull everyone behind listening to the athlete,' he says. 'Let's obsess [over] what they say. Let's obsess on making them better. The mission is really simple – make athletes better and then make the world better for athletes. That's what you're trying to do.'

This was the ethos behind the Breaking2 project: an idea not simply to create a shoe that would help athletes run faster, but to give it an actual, measurable success/failure metric. Although the marathon world record was inching slowly down, it was still a fair margin over the two-hour barrier. To knock those minutes off, you would need one hell of a shoe. You'd need, really, to reinvent it. And you'd need the perfect athlete to test it – then race in it. Luckily, Nike had the latter already.

From his bedroom in Iten, Kenya, training for what will turn out to be another world record in Berlin, Eliud Kipchoge muses over his relationship with Nike. 'I have to say that it has been a tremendous journey,' he says. 'I've been with Nike for 19 years now, but the best moments have been in the past 10 years when I've really been involved inside the company, testing the shoes, testing the apparel. I'm really happy to be involved in doing this work, from the bottom of my heart. When we started [the sub-2:00 project], it was very small, but then it expanded and where we are now… I can say that it's a game changer.' If anything, it's an understatement. The Vaporfly, and subsequently the Alphafly, have changed running history, worn to set official world record after world record as well as to break that two-hour barrier.

But it has been a long journey. The project started as early as 2014 with a first prototype, essentially a heel-less racing flat with a carbon fibre plate. Test runners hated it. In 2015, foam was added – a huge wodge of super-light foam usually used in aircraft insulation, which they named ZoomX. Embedded in that was a carbon fibre plate. In Kenya, Kipchoge was giving his feedback. He describes a process of constant tweaking: 'I try the shoes, I send my honest feedback, and again, and it's an interesting journey – a happy journey!'

As always with Nike, says Bignell, you centre on the athlete. 'The model has always been start with a Paula or an Eliud or whoever may be at the top of the pinnacle. Because they know their bodies really, really, really well,' he says.

The original Breaking2 attempt on the Monza racetrack in Italy in May 2017 ended in a rather glorious 'failure' – Kipchoge ran 2:00:25. He was watched, in an interesting demonstration of Nike's grassroots to elite influence, by runners invited from various Nike-supported crews from around the world. But in 2019, the 'impossible' barrier was broken by Kipchoge in Vienna, clocking 1:59:40 while wearing the prototype Alphafly, with two Air pods under the sole for even more energy return. Then, in September,

01/ The Zoom Vaporfly Elite, developed for Nike's Breaking2 attempt on the Monza race circuit

02 and 03/ Images from the 'mood board' of Stefan Guest, a senior design director at Nike who worked on the Breaking2 project

04/ In 2003, Paula Radcliffe set a marathon world record of 02:15:25 in London

05/ Iterations in the Vaporfly design process included a heel-less design

06/ Eliud Kipchoge finishes a marathon in Vienna in just under two hours

1987

Nike's ad for the new Air Max shoes comes out, using *Revolution* by the Beatles – it's the first ad to feature the band's music.

1988

The first 'Just Do It' campaign launches, featuring 80-year-old Walt Stack running across the Golden Gate Bridge.

1990

Nike's first retail store, Niketown, opens in Portland, Oregon. There are now more than 1,000 stores worldwide.

1991

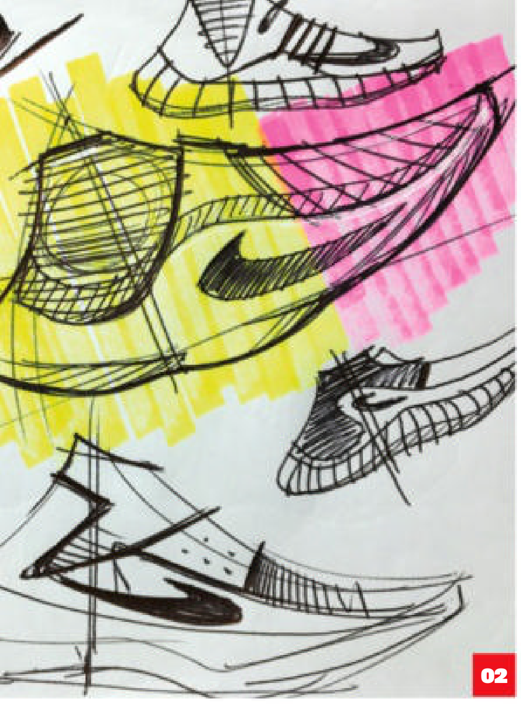
A report exposes poor conditions at Indonesian Nike factories. Nike instates its first factory codes of conduct.

1993

Nike launches its Reuse-A-Shoe campaign, offering consumers with a way to upcycle old shoes through in-store bins.

1994

Forrest Gump runs across the length of America in a pair of Nike Cortez trainers. Nike revenues hit $3.8bn.



02

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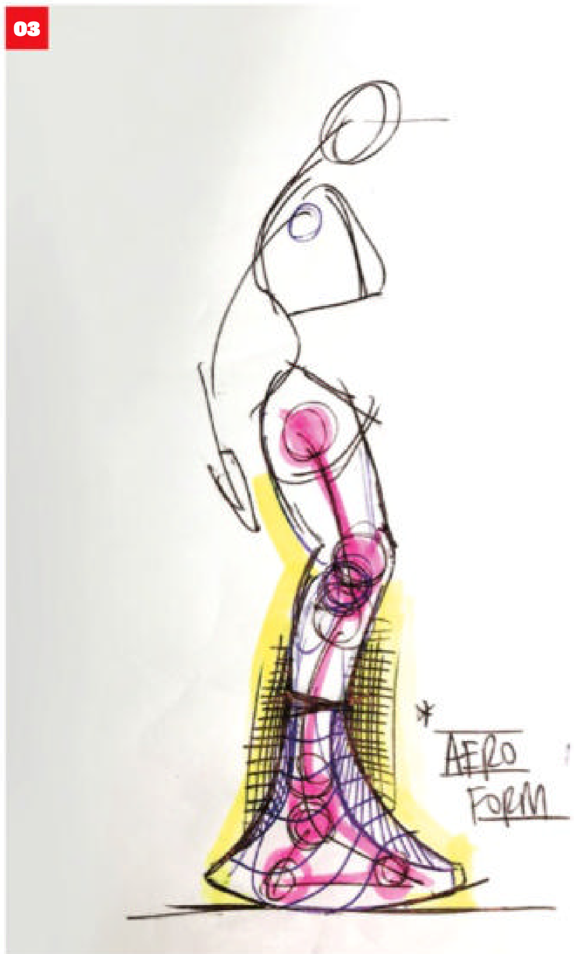

he wore the latest Nike Alphafly to take 30 seconds off his official world marathon record in Berlin for a time of 2:01:09.

The step change brought by carbon plates is undeniable. Some may mutter about 'shoe doping', but without Nike's support of elite athletes, and events, be it championships or projects such as Breaking2, the profile of running would be unimaginably different. And considerably slower.

NEXT STEPS

Given how long Breaking2 had been under way before we even heard of it, it's tempting to imagine a group of designers locked in a secret Nike lab, working on the next leap forwards. Perhaps even more cushioning, even greater stack heights? Bignell laughs. 'All these things constantly change – that we've gone big and high has a lot to do with protecting muscles,' he says. 'But if you could do that, if you could offer the same protection and it was thinner and lighter, then you would.'

Asking Bignell about Nike's next big goal elicits a surprising answer. You might expect talk of more records, but no. 'We spend a lot of time going from, okay, how do you serve a Kipchoge, but then how do you help my mum get around the block with her dog? I just want people to move,' he says.

He also raises an intriguing idea, sure to raise the hackles of running purists. '[Electric bikes] are brilliant because there's always a reason not to go on your bike, but you have this thing that can make it easy. And I would love to get there for running. Obviously not for competitions, but just to keep everyone moving.' Self-propelling running shoes? It sounds sci-fi, but then in 1972, carbon fibre plates would have sounded the same. 'If you don't push the edges and don't fail, you're never going to learn,' he says. 'It's never linear; it's always three steps backwards, two steps forwards. You want to win, and you do that by dreaming audaciously.'

For Kipchoge, part of the dream is finding ways to make it easier for people to fit running into their lives. 'Our mindset is to make the person recover very fast, whether they run that marathon in five hours, four hours, three hours,' he says. 'We want to help that person take care of their muscles, so they can run for five hours, but then tomorrow, they can then do their own hobbies or their own work without any pain.

'The aim personally, and with Nike, is longevity. We want people who are running for 10 years, 15 years, 20 years or more, and enjoying their runs every day. I want to work with Nike to spread the gospel of running,' he says. 'I always say if you want real freedom in life, it's in running.'

It's a message that will resonate with us all, and whatever the logo on the shoes we choose to wear when heading out to find that freedom, we owe a little something to Nike for its part in creating the running world around us. In another 50 years from now, we can be sure that world will have evolved in ways we can't yet imagine. And we can also be sure that Nike will have had a hand in shaping it. RW

06

1998	1999	2012	2014	2018	2022
Facing widespread protest, Nike raises the minimum age of workers and adopts clean-air standards in overseas factories.	In June, aged 88, Bowerman retires from the board of directors after 31 years. He dies peacefully in his sleep in December.	Nike now employs more than 44,000 people worldwide, including retail workers. Today, Nike has 73,000 employees.	Nike is now valued at $19bn, making it the most valued sports brand, according to the Forbes List.	Nike unveils its 'Dream Crazy' ad campaign with athlete and activist Colin Kaepernick, to public approval and backlash.	Nike celebrates its 50th anniversary. In October, the brand is valued at a staggering $166bn (around £141bn).

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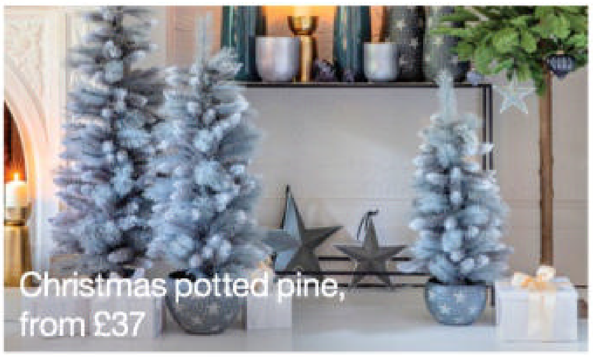

Christmas potted pine, from £37

Milah cotton stripe table runner, from £24

Holly Swirl baubles, from £19/six

HAND-PICKED BY THE STYLE EXPERTS

If you ask us, there's no such thing as too early to be thinking about Christmas and if your festive plans will be all about the entertaining, the news is good: our House Beautiful style experts have handpicked the very best in barware essentials (including gorgeous drinks trolleys like our best seller, above), making it easy for you to be the 'host with the most' for another year. With accessories like this as well as decor, gifts and even the Christmas tree itself, creating your own winter wonderland has never been easier. You'll get free delivery on all orders over £30. 'Tis the season!

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COACH

REACH *your* PERSONAL BEST

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BATTLE OF THE FLEXES

Pilates vs yoga – which core workout should you add to your training routine?

PHOTOGRAPHY: YANNIC LÄDERACH/UNSPLASH

STYLE COUNSEL

There's no 'right' way to run. But knowing your gait can help you pinpoint weaknesses and run stronger

WATCH YOURSELF RUN Analysing your gait on a video can help you to run better

THE RUNNING WORLD has a bias towards effort. We tend to focus on the volume and intensity of our training and the effect that they have on our cardiovascular fitness. Of course, this is important, but it's not the only piece of the performance puzzle. Gait and technique are also important components of performance, but they're often overlooked – other than when we buy new running shoes.

While we tend to develop our own running styles, our technique can affect running economy and put a limit on how fast we may eventually be able to run. Poor technique can increase the likelihood of injury, which, in turn, affects the consistency of your training and thus can hamper your potential to progress. By analysing your technique, you can try to identify some of the key potential risk factors to address with conditioning or drills.

Running technique is dynamic and complex, with lots of moving parts. That complexity can lead to sweeping judgements about 'good' or 'poor' form based on how pleasant a runner's movement is to the eye. The technique and gait you should be interested in is one that is effective – in terms of both performance and injury prevention. So don't try to force your body into a generic perfect-looking technique. Instead, assess yourself as an individual, think about your injury history, where you feel stronger or weaker in runs or races, or areas that feel less comfortable than they might.

How to analyse your gait

One approach is to engage the services of a performance lab. Biomechanics labs use sophisticated software to introduce a high level of detail and measurement to your gait analysis. This gives you key data and expert opinion. However, it can be expensive and, obviously, requires you to attend a lab.

There's also a range of DIY assessments. Looking at the wear pattern on your shoes can be a useful exercise, as it indicates areas of significant impact, as well as showing differences between your left and right side. But undertaking basic video analysis can be a more useful way to reflect on how your body actually moves. Here's how:

Set up: Place a camera, smartphone or tablet in landscape mode on a tripod. Or, failing that, get a friend to hold it.

Recording settings: Record in the highest resolution your device allows and at normal speed, not slow motion – you can slow it manually later.

Background: A clean background can make detail easier to see later.

Surface: A good starting point is a flat, firm surface. While treadmills are often used for gait analysis due to practicality, it's better if you can record outdoors.

Process: Set up your camera so you can record your whole body side-on, and fill five to eight seconds of footage. Record footage from this angle at a variety of paces before doing the same from directly behind – running away from the camera – and directly in front – running towards the camera. In addition to the footage, capture your cadence (or steps per minute) using your running watch or ask someone to help count your steps as you run. A 2011 study showed that as runners fatigued in a marathon, their technique changed. As such, consider capturing video when tired at the end of a long run or faster session.

Methodology: There's no one correct way to analyse running form. I tend to watch at full speed several times at various paces to try to see if anything stands out. Then I watch frame by frame to break down the various stages of the running gait, looking at individual components as opposed to trying to see everything at once. I take screenshots at key points and use annotation tools to help me better identify joint angles, posture and footstrike.

PERSONAL BEST

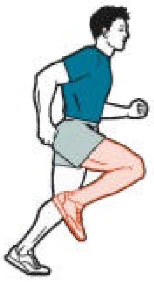
COACHING TIPS TO HELP YOU RAISE YOUR RUNNING GAME

BY TOM CRAGGS

RUNNING TECHNIQUE IS DYNAMIC AND COMPLEX, WITH LOTS OF MOVING PARTS

● Key phases of the running gait

Broadly, you'll see that some runners tend towards a more gliding type of gait, with lower knee lift and less up-and-down movement, whereas others tend towards a higher impact, more bouncy action. Neither is right or wrong, but they provide a useful context to the detail below.



● The early swing phase

What it is The moments after your foot pushes off from the ground.

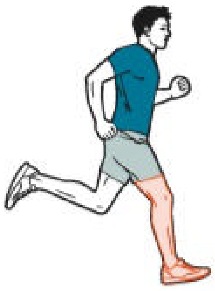
What to watch for

Thigh return: Check that your thigh is 'pulled' through quickly by the hip flexors after push-off and doesn't lag behind the hips.

Heel return: Look for a heel that's pulled quickly up towards the buttocks.

Trunk movement: Check for minimal rotation through the torso.

Posture and chest: Look for a 'tall' position, with hips and chest extended and shoulders in line with your hips.



● The late swing phase

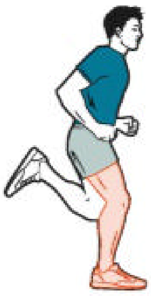
What it is The moments before your foot hits the ground.

What to watch for

Foot position: Foot flexed at the ankle by pulling your laces towards your shin.

Foot return angle: Your foot returns down and back towards the ground, not reaching out in front of your body.

Bean-shaped stride: Combined, the early and late swing phase of your running gait should almost have the shape of a kidney bean.



● Ground contact

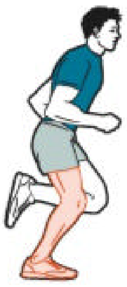
What it is The moment your foot lands on the ground.

What to watch for

Strike point: Which part of your foot contacts the ground first? The heel, midfoot or forefoot? Is your foot dorsiflexed at the ankle (toes pointing up) or plantar flexed (toes down)?

Shank angle: The angle between your footstrike and knee position. Ideally, your foot should land under your knee to create a neutral shank angle.

Active contact: As your foot strikes the ground, is it a passive contact, or is there some tension? Active foot contact is where your tendons react to pop you into your next stride.



● Stance phase

What it is When your foot is fully in contact with the ground.

What to watch for

Ground contact time: How much time do you spend on your foot? Do you quickly transition through your stance phase into your next stride?

Lean: Look for no more than a small forward lean from the ankle.

Pelvic position: Your pelvis position should appear neutral from a side view. Imagine your hips are a bucket of water – would the water be level or sloshing out? From the rear view, your hips should be as level as possible.

Hip extension: Are you sitting back into your hips or do you have a stronger, more extended hip position?

Tom Craggs is road running manager for England Athletics

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF MAKING CHANGES

So, what do you do with all this data? I'll explore that in detail next month but, for now, here are some guiding principles to bear in mind

1 / ALLOW TIME

Forcing your body to adopt different movement patterns too quickly is a big injury risk. For example, if you want to give barefoot running a try to develop a midfoot to forefoot strike, begin sparingly.

2 / IDENTIFY ASYMMETRIES

It is normal to have some differences between the left and right side, and front and back muscle strength. But major asymmetry might present injury risks and reduce running economy.

3 / BUILD STRENGTH AND MOBILITY

Strength training and mobility exercises are essential to help improve imbalances you've identified. These take time, patience and consistency.

4 / APPLY STRENGTH AND MOBILITY

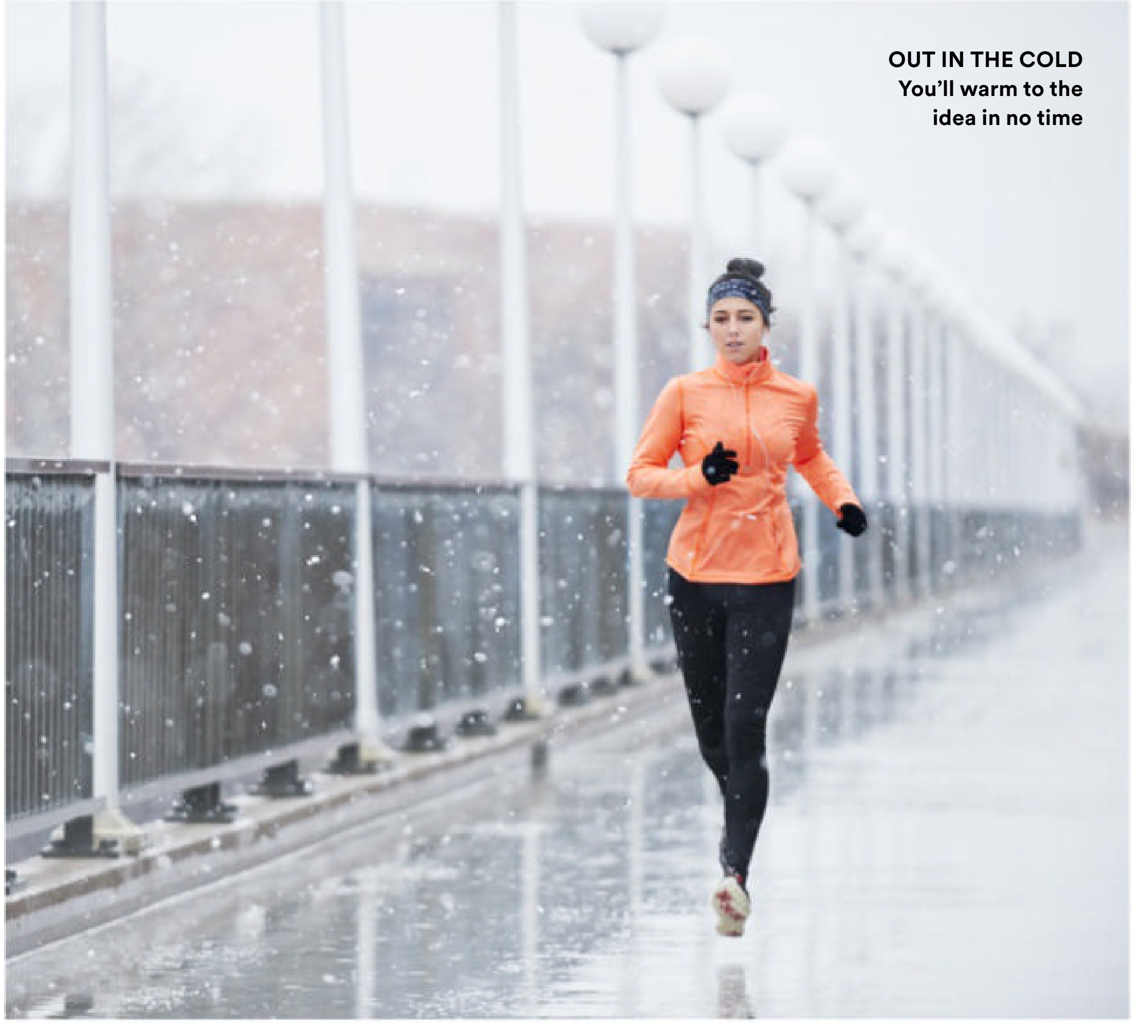
As you build your strength and mobility, you should add running drills that will allow you to utilise these improvements in running-specific movement patterns.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK; ILLUSTRATIONS: HARVEY SYMONS

ASK JO

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR RESIDENT OLYMPIAN

BY JO PAVEY



OUT IN THE COLD You'll warm to the idea in no time

I find it hard to get out there in the winter; how do you stay motivated?

Although it may feel tougher to get out the door during the winter months, I find that running boosts my overall feeling of wellbeing. Try warming up a bit indoors before you head out – facing the cold is easier if you're already warm. And wearing suitable clothing will make training more bearable. Long, lightweight layers made of breathable fabrics that wick away sweat are best, and don't forget a hat, gloves and thick socks. If it's possible to occasionally run in daylight, such as at the weekend or in your lunch hour, it will help to keep your spirits high. Meeting up with a friend or a running group also helps to make it more enjoyable and you won't want to let others down.

I've been running for about four weeks now and my shins are aching and feel really tight. Should I take a break?

Shin soreness, or medial tibial stress syndrome, is common in new runners, as their muscles are less adapted to the stresses of running. The muscles in the lower leg can become fatigued and pull on their attachments to the shin bone, or tibia. It's advisable to take some time off running initially to prevent your shin pain becoming more serious. If you continue running, there's a risk of developing stress fractures, as the muscles aren't adequately protecting the bones from the impact of running. Some rest will give you time to work on stretches, such as calf stretches with the knee straight and bent, and also gentle self-massage along the muscle of the shin (being careful not to touch the bone). If it persists after your break, it might be worth seeing a physiotherapist to identify any biomechanical issues, such as overpronation or tightness around the hips. When the pain settles, build up your running gradually. And during your break, you can work on suitable low-impact cross-training to help maintain your fitness levels.

Jo's tip: be flexible in winter

During winter, be flexible with your training – you can't always follow a schedule regardless of the weather, so don't be afraid to modify it. For example, if it's really icy, opt for off-road routes with good trail shoes, or use a treadmill. If you have an interval session planned but it's much colder than expected, try to go for longer reps with a shorter recovery rather than speedwork. Conversely, the opposite is true – if the weather is quite good, you could take the opportunity to top up with some better-quality work.

Can walking barefoot around the house cause issues for runners? I have wooden floors and I think it may be causing foot pain. Should I wear recovery sliders or flip-flops in the house?

Barefoot walking can be helpful for runners for strengthening the muscles and improving range of motion around the foot and ankle. It's also good for proprioception (your awareness of body position) and can allow a more natural gait pattern.

But doing it too much, particularly if you're not used to it, might cause issues with your feet. Hard surfaces, such as wooden floors, can cause problems as they're less forgiving. The plantar fascia is put under more strain while barefoot due to the lack of arch support and cushioning. The foot flattens more, which can stress the plantar fascia, and a hard surface also puts more pressure on the attachment of the plantar fascia to the heel bone. Barefoot walking on hard surfaces may also cause pain around the ball of the foot and the metatarsals, and can irritate the Achilles tendon, too. While you're experiencing foot pain, it could definitely be helpful to wear recovery flip-flops or sliders in the house, as these are designed to reduce stress on your feet between training. They usually include good arch support and cushioning. Alternatively, you could just use a clean pair of trainers. However, it's important not to neglect stretches and strengthening exercises for your feet, and you could try using a foot roller under your arches when sat down.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; STUDIO 33

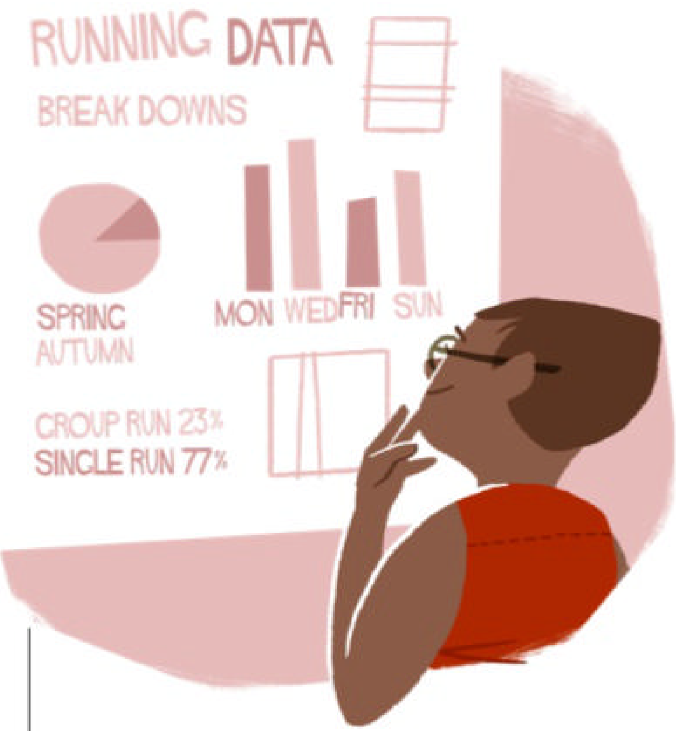
RHYTHM & GRIT

A FRESH TAKE ON MAXIMISING YOUR RUNNING ENJOYMENT

BY CORY WHARTON-MALCOLM

LOOK BACK IN CANDOUR

Analysing your past successes and failures is a good way to understand what works, what doesn't and how to improve



BEFORE I BREAK DOWN MY YEAR I ask myself one important question – did I accomplish what I wanted to? To begin with, it's a simple yes or no. After that, you can get into how you achieved it, or why you may have not.

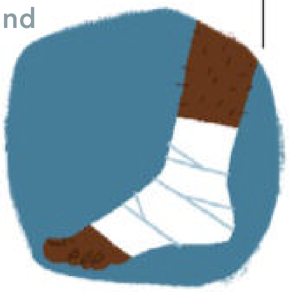
01 Look back at your races

Writing down your races or putting them on some kind of table helps keep everything you need in one place. Then you pick out your best race, the one in which you met your set goal, and compare it with one that you're not happy with, that didn't go to plan. Or pick your favourite and least favourite races. What was the difference between them? What went right, what went wrong and why?

02 Ask questions

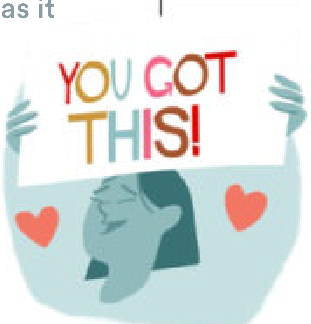
All of the below can affect a race, which is why having an answer can help you plan and build for the future.

- How did your training compare? What was your longest run in the build-up? Did you follow a plan or have a coach? Train with a group or solo? Did you take any time off for injuries? Did you put in more mileage and prep for one? Or did you do more speedwork, hills, cross-training or yoga?



- How long did you train for? How was your taper? Did you fuel well in the build-up? How much were you sleeping, resting and recovering? And did your in-race nutrition plan work?

- Were the races at different times of the year or times of day? Were they in different countries or cities? Was the race hilly? Was one of the races prettier than the other? How did the weather compare? Was it hot or cold? Was there a headwind or tailwind?


YOU GOT THIS!

- Were there people cheering for you at one of the races but not at the other? Did you run with someone, follow a pacer or run by yourself?

Of course, it's possible to just have a bad day. And that's okay, too. You don't need to have an answer for everything – there's a lot to consider. It's all about starting out slowly with little pieces of information and then building up to more. It doesn't all have to be about racing – one year all I wanted to do was get back to a place where I loved running again. It wasn't about medals, splits or times; it was about how my mind and body felt.

Cory is a running coach and founder of TrackMafia Running. Instagram: @bitbeefy, @trackmafia_

03 Work out what works for you

Based on the questions listed previously, I evaluated my year and concluded that I run at my best in the autumn after a spring of speed. If I'm running a marathon, I know I'm better off doing one in autumn or early winter, as entering one in spring means that I need to make a lot of sacrifices around my birthday, the festive season and new year – which I have done before and am happy to do again, but this is a perfect world that we're talking about.

I also know I perform at my best if I'm running with other people or chasing another pack of runners after following a plan that incorporates strength sessions, mobility exercises, cross-training and speedwork, too. I need lots of sleep, regular massages and assisted stretching. My body prefers later races. Events with lots of hills are not for me; I perform much better on routes with views and people cheering. I know the gels that work for me, when I need to take them during the race, the breakfast to have and the foods to stay away from. The plan is to carry on experimenting with what works, but to do more of those things that lead to you being fitter, healthier and happier all round.

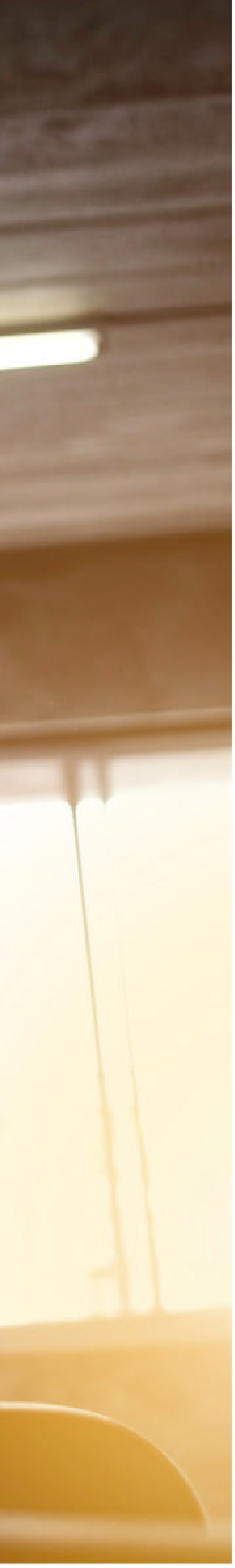
ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM NICKEL

HIGH TREAD COUNT
Make the most of your indoor training sessions

MACHINE LEARNING

The treadmill is a great winter training option. Here's how to get the most from it

→ **FOR SOME RUNNERS,** the treadmill is the epitome of monotony. You've almost certainly heard (or thought) the following: there's nothing interesting to see, it saps all the joy out of running, real runners train outdoors, and so on. But the treadmill has its fans and its uses. It's precisely its predictability that makes treadmill training a valuable resource, as it allows you to precisely control your pace. Just think about running on a cold, dark winter evening on uneven or slippery terrain, and then think about running in a comfortable temperature on a reliable rolling surface in a well-lit gym or room. You can include inclines, and the treadmill's softer running surface is easier on your joints and tendons. Suddenly the treadmill doesn't seem quite so bad.



4 KEY TREADMILL WORKOUTS

You can keep things interesting with some experimentation – here are a few fun and effective treadmill workouts.

01 Race simulation

Some treadmills allow you to run marathon race routes. You can adjust these simulations to your personal needs to help you prepare perfectly for your next 26.2.

The session: If your route isn't on the machine, use the elevation profile of the race to incorporate the same inclines into your session. So, if your race has a steep uphill after seven kilometres, raise the incline on the control panel after you've run at your goal pace for seven kilometres.

The benefit: You're ready for whatever the race throws at you on the big day. When that hard uphill arrives, you know you can do it.

02 Fast repeats

When doing a track or speedwork session, runners tend to slow down towards the end of their later reps. On the treadmill, however, the motor sets the tempo and you have no choice but to keep up, which can be a real challenge.

The session: Run for three minutes at a pace five secs per mile faster than your 5K pace. Repeat five to eight times. Between reps, go easy for two mins. Increase the reps every week. If you can manage eight reps at the set pace, it's time to increase the pace.

The benefit: This is a great way to build speed and 5K race readiness.

03 Treadmill hills

You can control the incline of the uphills and save yourself the impact of those thigh-crushing, knee-hammering downhills. You can also reduce the incline if you need to and crank it up again when you're ready for more.

The session: Run steady reps at a 4% incline for one min, with two mins of slower, flat recovery running in between. Over the course of four weeks, increase from eight to 10, then up to 20 reps of one min, with an incline of 6% by the end.

The benefit: The inclines strengthen your cardiovascular system without putting too much strain on your muscles – and you don't have to worry about downhills.

04 Random mode intervals

Sudden inclines and changes of pace can have positive effects on your training and are excellent preparation for races. Indeed, they are more effective than always trotting along on a familiar flat surface at the same pace.

The session: Even small changes in your training can make the time pass more quickly. Warm up for 10 mins and then run 20-min intervals using the treadmill's random mode. Finish with a 10-min cool-down.

The benefit: If you don't have much time to train, you can still make gains with higher intensity training. Random mode can also be a much-needed change for runners who are too attached to their running habits.

TREADMILL TRAINING PLAN

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Tue: 30 mins medium (2% incline)	**Tue:** 40 mins medium (2% incline)	**Tue:** 30 mins medium (2% incline)	**Tue:** 40 mins medium (2% incline)
Thu: 10 mins easy, 20 mins tempo, 10 mins easy (1.5% incline)	**Thu:** 10 mins easy; 5 × 3 mins fast, 2 mins easy; 10 mins easy (1.5% incline)	**Thu:** 10 mins easy; 25 mins tempo; 10 mins easy (1.5% incline)	**Thu:** 10 mins easy; 6 × 3 mins fast, 2 mins easy; 10 mins easy
Sat: 60 mins easy (1.5% incline)	**Sat:** 70 mins easy (1.5% incline)	**Sat:** 60 mins easy (1.5% incline)	**Sat:** 60 mins easy (1.5% incline)

Key

Easy: 75-80% of maximum heart rate

Medium: 80-85% of maximum heart rate

Tempo: 85-90% of maximum heart rate ('comfortably hard' pace)

Fast: over 90% of maximum heart rate (5K pace or faster)

TREADMILL TIPS

Incline instead of headwind

There's no wind in your face on a treadmill. While there aren't any reliable formulas for accurately replacing the resistance from a headwind with an equivalent incline, you should still make sure to set an incline of 1% to 2% before beginning your treadmill training.

Smaller steps

Running on the treadmill is a bit like running on grass. The surface beneath your feet is constantly moving, and this cushioning effect causes most runners to shorten their stride length. This also affects pace perception: a relatively easy pace can feel much faster on the treadmill. Listen to your body and adjust your running pace accordingly.

Make sure you drink enough

When training on a treadmill in an enclosed space, most runners will sweat more than they normally would outdoors. Remember to keep drinking when on the treadmill – take a sip every 10 minutes.

WORDS: MARTIN GRÜNING. TRANSLATION: STEPHEN GLENNON. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

GOBBLE, GOBBLE

Stretch your festive feast further with these nutrient-packed turkey sarnie recipes

One of the best things about the Christmas period is a well-stocked fridge. That said, one of the more tiresome aspects of the festive season is working out exactly what to do with all that extra food. But don't scoff yesterday's poultry just so it doesn't go to waste. Feed your guests (or yourself) with a well-built sandwich that can rival your Christmas Day dinner for flavour and easily outstrip it in terms of nutritional value.

Choose your loaf
Toasting bread boosts the sandwich's flavour and structural integrity. A toaster is fine, but heartier bread such as ciabatta benefits from a minute or so under the grill. Don't worry about the white stuff: high-GI carbs will be absorbed slowly when paired with proteins.

Layer it up
Each of these recipes makes two sarnies. (And yes, you can eat them both.) Double the flavour by distributing the spread on the top and bottom slices of bread. Add meat to the bottom slice, followed by an equal-sized portion of the filling, and then the top slice.

Banh mi

Bread: **2** small baguettes
Spread: **4 tbsp** mayo + **1½ tsp** sriracha sauce
Topping: sliced cucumber + grated carrot + sliced radish + **2 tbsp** rice vinegar + **pinch** of salt (mix all of these and allow to sit for 30 mins or more) + torn coriander.

FIBRE POWER

WORDS: MATTHEW KADEY; SCARLETT WRENCH. PHOTOGRAPHY: CHELSEA KYLE. FOOD STYLING: TYNA HOANG. PROP STYLING: SUMMER MOORE AT HONEY ARTISTS

TBLT

Bread: **4** slices of sourdough **Spread:** **4 tbsp** hummus + **2 tbsp** pesto **Topping:** **4 strips** cooked streaky bacon + **2** thick slices ripe tomato + torn lettuce.

PACKS PROBIOTICS

Beet master

Bread: **4** slices of wholemeal **Spread:** **4 tbsp** sour cream + **2 tbsp** horseradish + **1 tsp** lemon zest. **Topping:** sliced pickled beetroot + generous (or not) amount of sauerkraut.

Spud love

Bread: **4** slices of rye **Spread:** **8 tbsp** mashed sweet potato + **1 tbsp** chopped sage + **2 tsp** maple syrup + sprinkle of cinnamon **Topping:** **2 tbsp** walnuts + **1** sliced apple + baby kale.

Jalapeño popper

Bread: **2** sandwich thins or thin bagels **Spread:** **3 tbsp** barbecue sauce **Topping:** shredded lettuce + grated low-fat cheddar + pickled jalapeño slices.

Green goddess

Bread: **4** slices of sprouted grain **Spread:** **1** mashed avocado + **1** minced garlic clove + **1 tbsp** chopped chives + **1 tbsp** fresh lemon juice **Topping:** mozzarella + spinach + microgreens.

EXTRA PROTEIN

Big fig

Bread: **4** slices of seeded multigrain **Spread:** **3 tbsp** fig preserves + **1 tbsp** balsamic vinegar + **1 tbsp** chopped shallot + **1 tsp** fresh thyme **Topping:** sliced fennel + goat's cheese + rocket.

Mango curry

Bread: **2** large wraps **Spread:** **6 tbsp** Greek yoghurt + **1 tsp** yellow curry powder + **1 tbsp** fresh lime juice + sprinkle of cayenne **Topping:** sliced mango + red pepper + watercress.

SOURCE OF CALCIUM

Shroom service

Bread: **4** slices of pumpernickel **Spread:** **2 tbsp** wholegrain mustard **Topping:** **2** slices provolone cheese + sauteed mushrooms + parsley.

Sweet heat

Bread: **2** ciabatta rolls **Spread:** **3** tbsp cream cheese + **2 tsp** lime zest **Topping:** **6 tbsp** chunky cranberry sauce + **2 tbsp** chopped onion + **1 tbsp** sliced jalapeño + chopped coriander.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: BELL & BLOOD STUDIO. WORDS: LUCIE RUTTER

FOOD TO GO

EXPERT NUTRITION ADVICE
TO FUEL YOUR RUNNING

By Renee McGregor

Strong in defence

What to eat and do to support your immune system through winter

When the days are short and cold, and the next race seems a lifetime away, even the most disciplined of runners can struggle to find the motivation to get out and train. Throw in a niggle, a seasonal sniffle (or worse) and consistent training can easily go out of the window. So how can you winter-proof your life and ensure you support your immune health to avoid that dispiriting break in training?

Comfort carbohydrates

We all know that feeling – the temperature plummets and all you want to do is eat stodge. But it's important to include wholegrain, complex carbs in your diet, as they help your muscles work efficiently and support recovery, gut, bone and hormonal health. Aim for a third of a plate of wholegrain, nutrient-dense carbs at every meal, such as **sweet potato**, pasta, rice, oats or bread.

Stay hydrated

Having a cold drink can be the last thing on your mind in winter. However, being hydrated encourages the production of saliva, which is a first line of defence against infection. One tip is to flavour your fluid – use no-added-sugar squash or **fruit/herbal teas**, as these encourage you to drink.

Supplement with vitamin D

This nutrient helps maintain bone health and protect immune function. We get most of our vitamin D from sunlight, so a supplement is a good idea in winter. The general maintenance dose for runners is 2,000iu a day, but this will depend on the levels in your blood.

Eat nutrient-dense meals

This doesn't have to mean slaving away for hours over a hot stove. A few years ago, I invested in a slow cooker and it made a huge difference to my life. By putting aside as little as 10 to 15 minutes, you can prepare all the ingredients you're going to throw into the slow cooker. Use a variety of **seasonal vegetables** to make soups, casseroles and curries. Knowing there's a delicious and nutritious meal ready when you get in from training can be all the motivation you need to squeeze in a session after work.

Think gut health

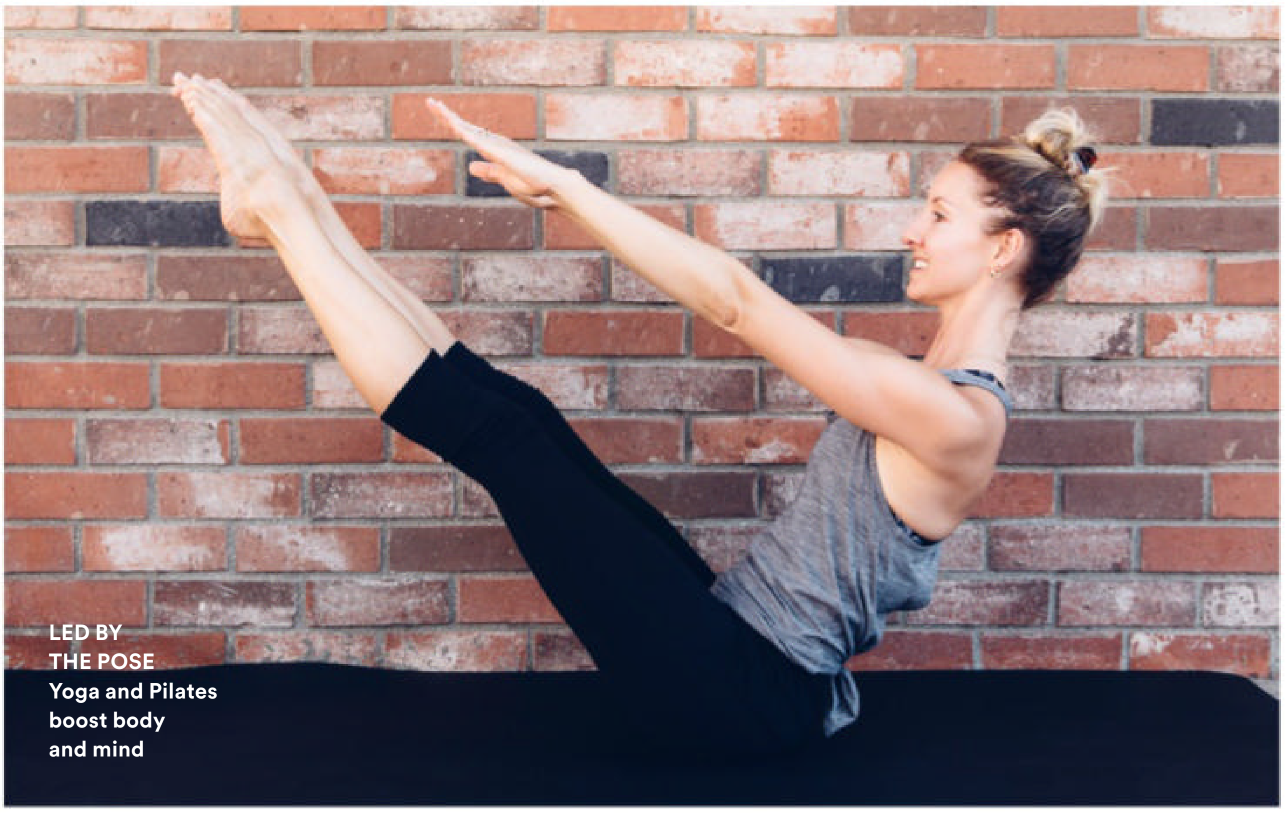
Many studies have shown the link between a healthy gut biome and a strong immune system. In general, the more diverse your gut biome, the healthier you are. Food such as wholegrains, fruit, veg and **fermented foods** encourage a healthy gut biome. Research has also shown that a course of probiotics, ideally water-based (try Symprove, £149.99 for a 12-week pack, symprove.com), can help prevent the incidence of upper respiratory tract infections in highly active people.

Get enough ZZZs

A minimum of seven hours' sleep (eight is better) is necessary to help repair the body – the growth hormone responsible for physical repair spikes from midnight to 2am. Try to develop good sleep-hygiene habits, such as putting away your phone or laptop at least 30 minutes before you go to bed. Solid sleep will help you maintain your energy levels during winter.

Renee McGregor is a leading sports dietitian with over 20 years' experience. reneemcgregor.com

PHOTOGRAPHY: ELLIS PARRINDER; MICHAEL HEDGE; STUDIO 33; MITCH PAYNE; ROB WHITE; GETTY IMAGES



LED BY THE POSE
Yoga and Pilates boost body and mind

IS PILATES OR YOGA BETTER FOR RUNNERS?

Both practices offer mind-body benefits and a low-impact way to cross-train. If you've ever wondered which one is right for you, here's our guide

YOGA AND PILATES bring a focus to your breathing and, of course, they don't involve running – which demands repetitive high impact on the bones and joints. Plus you can tailor each practice to suit different fitness levels. And you can do both with minimal equipment – all you need is a mat and the time to focus on your movement.

Even better: Pilates and yoga offer health benefits and there is no shortage of supporting research. For example, a study by the New York University Grossman School of Medicine, published in 2020, concluded that yoga has the potential to reduce anxiety, thanks to its mindfulness approach. Another meta-review, published in the *European Journal Of Preventive Cardiology* in 2014, highlighted yoga's ability to benefit cardio-metabolic health – it helps to lower blood pressure, heart rate, overall cholesterol and triglyceride numbers.

As for Pilates, a systematic review that was published in the journal *Frontiers in Neurology* in 2021 found that the physicality of a session can promote strength, balance and flexibility in adults over the age of 55. Because it's a mind-body form of training, Pilates can also improve quality of life, sleep and mood states, according to the research.

Another systematic review and meta-analysis, published in *PLoS One* in 2021, says that Pilates and yoga may help older women between the ages of 45 and 78 to

PILATES AND YOGA BENEFIT STRENGTH AND BALANCE

maintain bone-mineral density and that both forms of exercise benefit overall strength and balance.

● What's Pilates all about?

Pilates focuses on activating muscles while stretching them, says Abby Suskin, a certified Pilates instructor. 'Pilates is an efficient workout because when you contract muscles at their end range – or their lengthened position – you're also creating stronger and more flexible muscles,' she says. It's likely there will also be pulses and holds at that end range of motion.

Some Pilates classes are done on a mat and may include props, such as a ball, band or ring. 'Mat Pilates is traditionally a series of 34 movements developed by [Joseph] Pilates that constitute a total-body workout using only your body weight as resistance,' Suskin says.

If you head to a studio for a Pilates class, you might find a reformer – a piece of equipment that looks like a moving mat with springs, pulleys, ropes and a sliding carriage. On the reformer, your core typically gets an extra challenge because you have to balance on the moving mat while using your arms and legs against the resistance of the springs.

What makes Pilates stand out from yoga is that it has more of a focus on resistance training, particularly when using the reformer or when incorporating light weights or bands. Pilates incorporates this resistance into functional movement patterns or those you practise in everyday life, says Suskin. 'You'll see everyday movements such as squats, planks and overhead reaches in a Pilates class,' she adds.

Suskin says the intensity of a Pilates class can vary depending on the type (mat work versus using the reformer), but you can expect a lot of total-body work and a big core burn because each exercise emphasises your core as the centre of your movements.

● Why is Pilates good for runners?

As a runner, you need full range of motion through your stride and strength through that stride, and Pilates helps you build that mobility as well as strength. Core stability, a signature payoff of Pilates, is also crucial for runners, as it helps you maintain an upright posture on the road and therefore improves the efficiency of your gait. Plus, you'll strengthen other running muscles during a Pilates class. 'Runners have a lot of power in their quads, hamstrings and hip flexors, but if you never work those muscles at their full range of motion, you miss out on a lot of potential power and may be setting yourself up for injury,' says Suskin.

● What's yoga all about?

Yoga is a discipline rooted in meditative elements and the connection of breath and body. The practice, which began in India, is more than 5,000 years old – the word yoga comes from the Sanskrit word 'yuj', which means to yoke or to unite. The goal of a yoga session is often to still the mind and find harmony in the physical, mental and spiritual state.

In general, yoga is a practice of asanas (or postures) that are linked to breath (pranayama). While yoga started as more of a spiritual and mind-focused practice, today's classes include physical elements. There are many styles of yoga to suit all fitness levels and preferences, ranging from high-energy and sweat-inducing classes to more mellow variations, with movements done at a relaxed pace or held for several minutes.

The connecting factor between most styles of yoga is that a class will connect your breath with each pose, and the instructor will continually remind you to stay present. Yogi Sarrah Strimel Bentley says her classes last from 60 to 75 minutes, beginning with a warm-up of the spine, joints, ankles and the muscle groups she'll focus on later on. Bentley works her class toward a challenging pose, such as a headstand, crow pose or splits and then brings them back down from there.

Most yoga classes offer props such as blocks, straps or blankets to help you modify and be comfortable in poses. Some yoga teachers weave themes or philosophies into their instruction, too, which are related to the asanas they teach. For example, they might encourage empowerment as you flow from one pose to the next, or to have an open heart as you open your chest in a posture.

In most yoga classes, you can also expect a relaxing savasana (or corpse pose) at the end. This is a time to turn down the lights, stretch out on your mat, meditate, listen to soothing sounds or music, and consciously release tension – all things runners can benefit from doing.

● Why is yoga good for runners?

Bentley says yoga offers runners the opportunity to stretch and lengthen the muscles they consistently use on the road. 'Yoga is important for runners because it offsets the constant repetitive movement of your stride,' she explains. For example, your hamstrings contract when you're running and a regular yoga session helps to stretch and open up those overused muscles that runners rely on so much, she adds.

Learning breathing techniques and trying different types of breathing can help runners gain more control of their respiration, which can be helpful in boosting performance. A yoga session also encourages mindfulness, which can help you power through a long or tough run.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR MIND-BODY PRACTICE

While you'll improve your breath control, posture and balance from both disciplines, here's how to choose the one that's better suited to your goals and lifestyle:

Try Pilates if you're looking to…
- Build total-body strength, with a focus on core stability
- Enhance mobility
- Improve muscular endurance

Try yoga if you're looking to…
- Practise meditation or mindfulness
- Improve flexibility
- Enhance your breathing to find calm and stress relief

WORDS: JENNIFER ACKLER. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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W

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RUNNER'S WORLD

GEAR AWARDS 2022

Over the course of the year, the *Runner's World* team test hundreds of running products, from shoes and tech to apparel and accessories. Some are groundbreaking innovations, others are updates and iterations. We put the miles in to sort the good, the bad and the ugly to help you find the kit that will enhance your running experience. Then, at the end of each year, we select the best of the best to feature in our Gear Awards. Over the following pages, we share the items that have helped us boost our performance or amplify our running joy this year. We hope they'll do the same for you.

WORDS: JOE MACKIE. PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL HEDGE; ROWAN FEE; PIXELEYES

BEST SMARTWATCH

Apple Watch Series 7

£369, apple.com

While it remains a smartwatch first and a running watch second, the Series 7 is undoubtedly Apple's best running tool yet, and for most runners, it will offer everything needed for daily life and your daily trot. Heart-rate data and GPS function are improved from previous models and the larger screen makes it easier to see your data on the run. The single-charge six-hour battery life isn't ultra-friendly, but it'll see most of us through a marathon. It has features that classic run watches don't, too, including automatic run tracking and the ability to send and receive data from treadmills.

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BEST JACKET

Soar Ultra Jacket

£210, soarrunning.com

The running jacket is a difficult piece of kit to get right. You need a balance between breathability and weatherproofing, and all in a lightweight package. The Ultra Jacket nails it. It's built for performance, with a drawstring waist and large, zipped rear pocket. Plus, Soar's Rainout fabric doesn't need a separate membrane, which helps to ensure you don't overheat and keeps the weight down to just 144g.

RUNNER'S GEAR AWARDS 2022

GORE-TEX INFINIUM
GORE

BEST GLOVES

Gorewear C3 Gore-Tex Infinium Stretch Gloves

£54.99, gorewear.com

As a wise runner once said: life is too short for cold fingers. These will keep your digits protected from the elements on winter runs – totally windproof and water-resistant, yet light and breathable, with four-way stretch in the fabric. Reflective details help keep you safe and seen on night (or early morning) outings. What's more, you can use touchscreen devices without taking them off.

BEST SUNGLASSES

Oakley Sutro Lite Sweep

£152, oakley.com/en-gb

A new-in-22 offering from the standard-setters in performance eyewear, the Sutro's oversized, curved lens offers excellent field of view, with Prizm tech to boost colour and contrast, plus impact protection to keep your peepers safe from anything you don't see coming. The frame is feather-light, with moulded 'earsocks' at the temples and non-slip grip nosepads to ensure the fit is super-secure and so comfy you barely know they're there.

BEST MEN'S SHORTS

Saysky Pace Shorts 5"

£60, saysky.co.uk

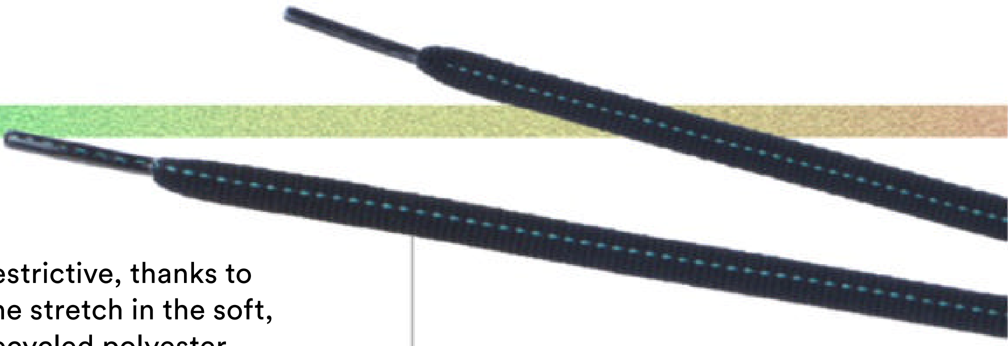
A classic running short done brilliantly. The soft, light, wicking, four-way-stretch performance fabric is made from 88% recycled polyester. The narrow fit eliminates any in-run flapping, while still packing in two inner gel pockets and a zipped back pocket with sweat-repellent lining. And they look great, too. ►

BEST MEN'S UNDERWEAR

Björn Borg Performance Boxer

£19, bjornborg.com

A long-time fave among the male contingent of the *RW* team, these just get everything right. The fit is close and supportive without ever feeling restrictive, thanks to the stretch in the soft, recycled polyester. Smooth seams eliminate chafing, while the 'Hydro Pro' fabric tech wicks moisture away from your skin to keep you dry when cranking up the effort. The perfect pair of pants to pull on under your running shorts.



BEST SPORTS BRA

Maaree Solidarity High-Impact Sports Bra

£64, maaree.com

Particularly suited to those with larger chests, the Solidarity features Maaree's 'overband' tech – an adjustable band that runs across the top of the breasts. The resulting combination of comfort and stability can make a real difference to your running experience.

BEST WOMEN'S LEGGINGS

Lululemon Fast and Free HR Crop 23" leggings

£98, lululemon.co.uk

There's much to love here – they're lightweight, sweat-wicking, breathable and soft against the skin, with four-way stretch for freedom of movement. But what seals the deal is the wide, tight waistband and continuous drawcord that keeps them securely in place with no need for mid-run hitching. They also have five waistband pockets for gels, keys, etc, and two phone-friendly side-drop pockets.

BEST ROAD SHOE (TRAINING)

Asics Gel Nimbus 24

£165, asics.com

Scooping the Best In Test Award in our spring/summer Shoe Buyer's Guide, the 24th iteration of the Nimbus features a lighter, softer midsole that impressed our testers with its balance of cushioning and energy return. Not for speed sessions or short races, but for everyday miles and long runs, it delivers superbly.

BEST TRACKER

Whoop 4.0

£264 for a one-year subscription, join.whoop.com

The band tracks activity, health metrics – such as body temperature, respiratory rate, blood oxygen levels, resting heart rate and heart rate variability – and your sleep to deliver a daily read-out of your strain and recovery. This tells you when your body is primed for intense effort or needs you to prioritise recovery on a day-by-day basis. You also get weekly and monthly performance reports to show you longer-term trends and help you to spot longer-term beneficial and/or detrimental patterns.

BEST RECOVERY PRODUCT

Hyperice Vyper 3

£189, hyperice.com

Foam rolling may stir dread in many runners, but recent studies have found positive results for the potential benefits of vibrating rollers in both boosting recovery and priming your body for performance pre-run. Designed for that dual functionality, the Vyper 3 is compact enough to be reasonably portable, with a contoured design that helps avoid excessive pressure on your spine and other sensitive areas to deliver a more comfortable roll. ►

RUNNER'S GEAR AWARDS 2022

HOKA
Vibram

BEST TRAIL SHOE

Hoka Speedgoat 5

£130, hoka.com

Our Trail Shoe Guide Best In Test winner is a robust, dependable and supremely comfortable performer. Snug and slipper-like, it hugs the foot with a gusseted tongue to aid the sock-like fit. The ride is soft on hard-packed trails with enough bounce to keep your legs feeling lively. The lighter, more cushioned foam midsole and grippy outsole will smoothly carry you over any terrain.

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RISE 7:06a
VO2 MAX. 54
ALT 11248
HR 72
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START
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LAP

BEST GPS RUNNING WATCH

Garmin Fenix 7

£599, garmin.com

When we took a deep dive into wrist-mounted tech, this total running tool came out on top. It packs Garmin's full suite of training, racing, fitness, wellness, navigation and smartwatch features, including suggested workouts, training feedback, recovery time, sleep tracking, phone-free music and contactless payments. Plus, there's extended battery life (37 to 89 hours' GPS run time, extending to 122 with the right power-saving modes and good solar conditions), improved solar charging, colour touchscreen and colour TOPO maps. There are three different case sizes, plus Standard, Solar and Sapphire Solar models, but we reckon the Sapphire Solar is the best.

BEST SOCKS

▼

Smartwool Run Targeted Cushion Low Ankle Socks

£16.99, smartwool.co.uk

Smartwool has been making high-performing running socks for many years, but the brand continues to upgrade. Case in point here, with updated mesh zones to improve breathability and fit, plus a deeper, cushioned heel, which feels extra secure. They're made from responsibly sourced materials, too.

BEST WOMEN'S SHORTS

▼

Tracksmith Session shorts

£77, tracksmith.com

A perfect blend of comfort and performance, versatile enough for anything from easy runs to PB chases and available in 5in or 7in length to match where you sit on the modesty-speed continuum. The lightweight, four-way-stretch knit fabric is moisture wicking with built-in UV protection, plus there's a concealed back pocket for valuables.

MONTANE
MONTANE

BEST RUNNING BACKPACK

▼

Montane Gecko VP 20+

£130, montane.com

A do-it-all pack that combines body-hugging race-vest comfort with a run-commute friendly 20L capacity. The main compartment will take a 15-inch laptop, and there are mesh side pockets and shoulder-strap pockets, too. Adjustable chest and waist straps lock in a secure, comfortable fit.

BEST WOMEN'S RACE TOP

▼

Under Armour Iso-Chill 200 Laser Tank

£45, underarmour.co.uk

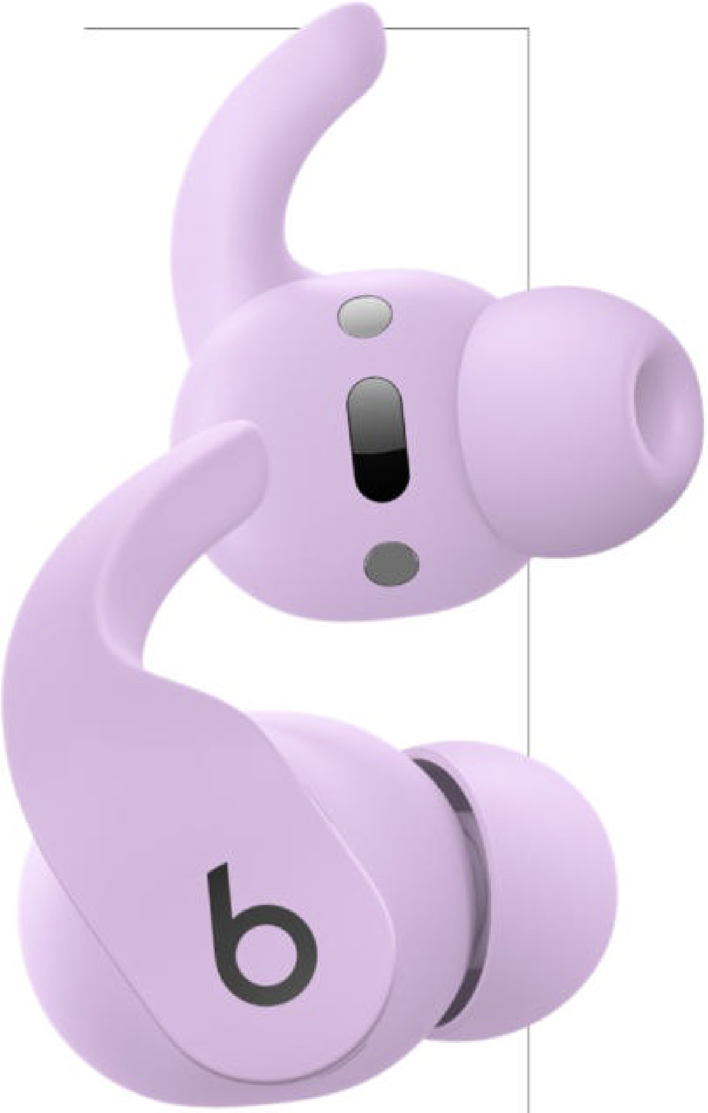
We were impressed with the moisture-wicking and heat-dispersing qualities of the Iso-Chill fabric when we tested this top in the summer. It feels cool and comfortable against the skin and has anti-odour tech woven in to prevent the growth of pong-producing microbes. Breathability is further boosted by laser-cut perforations on the back panel and the fit is excellent – cut to move with your body and floaty in all the right places without being flappy, while the four-way-stetch fabric enhances freedom of movement. ►

BEST MEN'S RACE TOP

Soar Elite Race Vest 4.0

£66, soarrunning.com

'A masterclass in minimalism', according to Soar. It's a bold claim but the performance backs it up. The close, ergonomic fit is cut away at the back and shoulders to improve freedom of movement, the 100% recycled, super-light open-mesh fabric wicks sweat superbly and bonded seams eliminate chafing. Worn for several *RW* team PBs this year.



BEST HEADPHONES

Beats Fit Pro

£219.99, beatsbydre.com

These wireless buds won the Best In Test award when we put running headphones through their paces earlier this year, thanks to a rich, punchy sound powered by the same chip you'll find in Apple's flagship AirPods Pro, an impressive 30-hour case-plus-buds battery life and a super solid fit that was the best we tested.

BEST WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR

Runderwear Women's Running Briefs

£18, runderwear.com

A go-to first layer among the *RW* team, thanks to the considered running-specific design coupled with quality fabric and construction. What sits against your skin is key to a comfortable running experience, and these are breathable, moisture-wicking, stretchy and seam-free for guaranteed chafe-free miles.

BEST TREADMILL

Bowflex BFX56 Treadmill

£4,499, fitness-superstore.co.uk

A serious investment but substantial returns if you're looking to log indoor miles. The winner of our treadmill test has a roomy belt and sturdy base for comfy, wobble-free runs. It links to the brand's JRNY app, which provides workouts based on the data it tracks.

BEST MEN'S LEGGINGS

On Tights Long

£95, on-running.com

Warm enough for the coldest days, light enough for speedwork days. Made from a recycled polyamide and elastane fabric, they fit tight with a slightly compressive feel, but are very stretchy so never feel restrictive. Impressive attention to detail delivers an extra layer at the knee to keep those sensitive tendons warm, covered pockets, ankle zips for easy on and off and a wide, adjustable waistband to make sure they stay put when they're on.

BEST ROAD SHOE (RACING)

Nike Air Zoom Alphafly Next% 2

£269.95, nike.com

Eye-wateringly expensive and an affront to some running purists, but for PB-hunters seeking an entirely legal performance boost, this evolution of the only shoe ever to clock a sub-two-hour 26.2 is the one. It was awarded Best In Test in our autumn/winter Shoe Guide, and really is the best race shoe out there, we reckon.

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ATOMKNIT
air ZOOM

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Exuberant and wildly colourful, as usual, but there was also serious intent at this year's San Francisco Pride Run

THE RAINBOW EFFECT SHOWS ITS TRUE COLOURS

A jet-lagged, Covid-weakened John Carroll gets his second wind at San Francisco's Pride Run

THE FLIGHT FROM LONDON to San Francisco takes almost 11 hours, so I felt dull-eyed and straggly tailed the following morning – which was, at least, cool – as I made my uncertain way through the city's Golden Gate Park to the 42nd Pride Run.

I simply followed a group of runners who were drinking buckets of (presumably) terrible pre-run coffee and wearing rainbow socks, tops, shorts, wigs or all four. Demurely Irish, but keen to display a sense of occasion, I too was wearing rainbow socks, but had allowed them to gather at my ankles, like the wayward schoolboy I never was.

San Francisco's Pride Run takes place the day before the annual Pride parade, the culmination of a month of events celebrating the city's LGBTQ+ culture and community. I'd expected a bigger turnout for a Pride weekend 5K and 10K, but there were about 350 runners in all and it was sold out, so I'm sure the organisers, San Francisco FrontRunners, were happy. There weren't many spectators, but perhaps people were saving themselves for the main event – the parade. For a while I thought there was a lack of pre-race pizzazz, too, but then I saw the massive rabbit and the dancing pink unicorn and I knew it was going to be a good morning. Time to pull up my socks.

As befits the event, there were a lot more colourful outfits in evidence than you find at most races and the pre-race music was, mercifully, more varied – Beyoncé, Britney and Dolly Parton were prominent; if someone had played *The Final Countdown*, I suspect there'd have been a riot. That said, and despite the increasingly buoyant atmosphere, it was easy to spot the runners who fancied a sub-20 5K before breakfast. I was not among them, though the breakfast part sounded good.

Before we set off, there were a couple of speeches to set the tone. While the race was a celebration, there was a sense of defiance in the

PHOTOGRAPHY: TOPHER OLSON

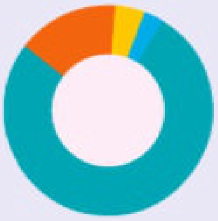
air – only the day before, following the decision by the US Supreme Court to overturn the Roe V Wade decision that had guaranteed protection of abortion rights in the US for 50 years, Justice Clarence Thomas had said rulings establishing gay rights should also be reconsidered. 'They're coming for LGBTQ+ people, too,' said state senator Scott Wiener. 'This is the fight of our lives.' The cheering was loud, long and stirring. Then, energised by his words and a magnificently camp warm-up, we were off.

The first, short section was wide and slightly downhill, which suited me. Not only was I scatty with jet-lag and a poor night's sleep, but also I was recovering from an encounter with Covid a couple of weeks earlier. Exertion was not an option.

After only a minute or so, we turned on to a narrow trail section and I sensed the beginning of what would be a long, slow incline and my short, fast decline. This was not a tough route, but my lungs were dangling in my chest like Christmas balloons in February, so I found myself struggling after less than a kilometre. I slowed down and tried to distract myself with the scenery, which was easy. Golden Gate Park is huge, covering 1,017 acres (for comparison, Hyde Park in London is 350 acres) and its attractions include the Japanese Tea Garden, Hoover Redwood Grove and Hippie Hill, where you can really, really relax. The route did not take in these sights but the views were generally lovely and the air, scented with blue gum eucalyptus and pine trees, was delicious. And we did get to see the bison paddock on our left, which was enough to take my mind off my pendulous lungs – truly, I'd have had more success inflating an airship with a bicycle pump. But I wasn't terribly bothered, for there they were, actual bison. Great, shaggy beasts standing about and... that's about it, actually. Bison don't do much and do not feel the need to impress humans by being amusing, agile or delightful, like showboating dolphins. They just stood there, looking majestic. And I felt better. Of course, only a moment later I had to stop running, to catch my breath, but it had already gone on ahead. Another runner – older, but leaner, deeply tanned and with a whitewashed wall of perfect teeth – looked back and called, 'If it's any consolation, it's downhill after the turn. Sort of.' I will never tire of the way runners look after each other.

THE RUNDOWN

San Francisco Pride Run 5K, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, US (2022 results)
First man: Andre Hessini, 16:27
First woman: Sophie Payne, 17:33
Last finisher: 1:23:19
No of finishers: 323



Finishing stats:
● <20 mins: 4%
● 20-39 mins 74%
● 40-59 mins 19%
● 1 hr+ 3%

The last section was indeed 'sort of' downhill and I didn't need to stop again until I'd crossed the finish line. It was easily my slowest 5K but I cared not a jot. I had run on the first day of my holiday, I had finished, I had embraced the occasion and now I was heading to Eddie's Diner for breakfast, because it's the meal that Americans do better than anyone else. Or bigger, anyway.

Run it: The next San Francisco Pride Run will take place in June 2023 (date tbc), sffr.org/priderun

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Like this? Try... three more races that unite people

RACE FOR LIFE 5KS

This series of runs (3Ks, 5Ks and 10Ks, as well as Race for Life at home and in schools) gives people the chance to come together and help fight cancer by raising funds and showing support.
Throughout the UK from May, cancerresearchuk.org

GLOBAL RUNNING DAY

Stick this one in your diary, whatever else you decide to do in 2023. Global running day is about inspiring people to lace up and get out there. It doesn't matter how far you run: just go.
Worldwide, 7 June 2023, globalrunningday.org

LONDON MARATHON

Even if you didn't get a place in the 2023 event, you can connect with runners everywhere by doing it virtually, no matter where you are. Plus you'll have 23 hours, 59 minutes and 59 seconds to finish.
London and worldwide, 23 April 2023, tcslondonmarathon.com

STILL GOING STRONG: BRIGHTON HALF MARATHON

This ever-popular race is now in its fourth decade. Its secret? A sense of community and unbeatable race-day atmosphere

1

HOW DID IT START?

AS THE 1990S KICKED OFF – the era that brought us Cool Britannia, the PlayStation and *Friends* – a race was making a modest debut on the south coast. Although its exact origins are now somewhat hazy, what is certain is that the initial Brighton Half Marathon in February 1990 was established by local runners, partly as a tune-up for London and other spring marathons. Ron Grover, who had set up Brighton's popular Arena 80 running club, is credited with being among its founders. Even in those early days, the race was closely linked with supporting those living with HIV and AIDS, which the world had become aware of the decade before. Back then, as it still is today, the event was a vital fundraiser for The Sussex Beacon charity, which has an established HIV care centre in the city.

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

THE EARLY OUTINGS had a distinctly old-school vibe. Around 400 runners – many from the local club scene – gathered at Brighton Marina before setting off from the Asda car park. Soon, competitors snaked along the Undercliff Walk before running along pavements, as roads weren't closed off as they are now. The winner of the inaugural race was Dave Knight who, along with his medal, pocketed a £25 voucher for his 67 minutes of hard graft. Despite the race's low-key early years, numbers picked up and it attracted around 1,500 entrants in its 10th year – and has continued to grow ever since. Before Covid struck, it had never been cancelled despite some wild weather. The route's changed, though, no longer sticking to the outskirts of Brighton, instead taking in the city's sights with the sea as a backdrop. There were a few red faces in 2012 when it was discovered the course was too long, and again in 2017, after it was revealed the course had been 146m too short for the previous three years.

2
Vitality BRIGHTON HALF MARATHON
1:50:28
the sussex beacon
BROOKS

WHO RUNS IT?

NO LONGER THE reserve of elites, it now welcomes all abilities among its 12,000 entrants. Paul Martelletti holds the men's course record of 1:04:53. Doctor Eleanor Davis holds the women's record of 1:14:27. Hove-based Norman Cook (aka Fatboy Slim) often takes the role of race starter before running it, with Dame Kelly Holmes doing the same thing in 2022. Comedians Zoe Lyons, Joe Wilkinson and Steve Coogan have all completed it, too.

THREE REASONS TO RUN

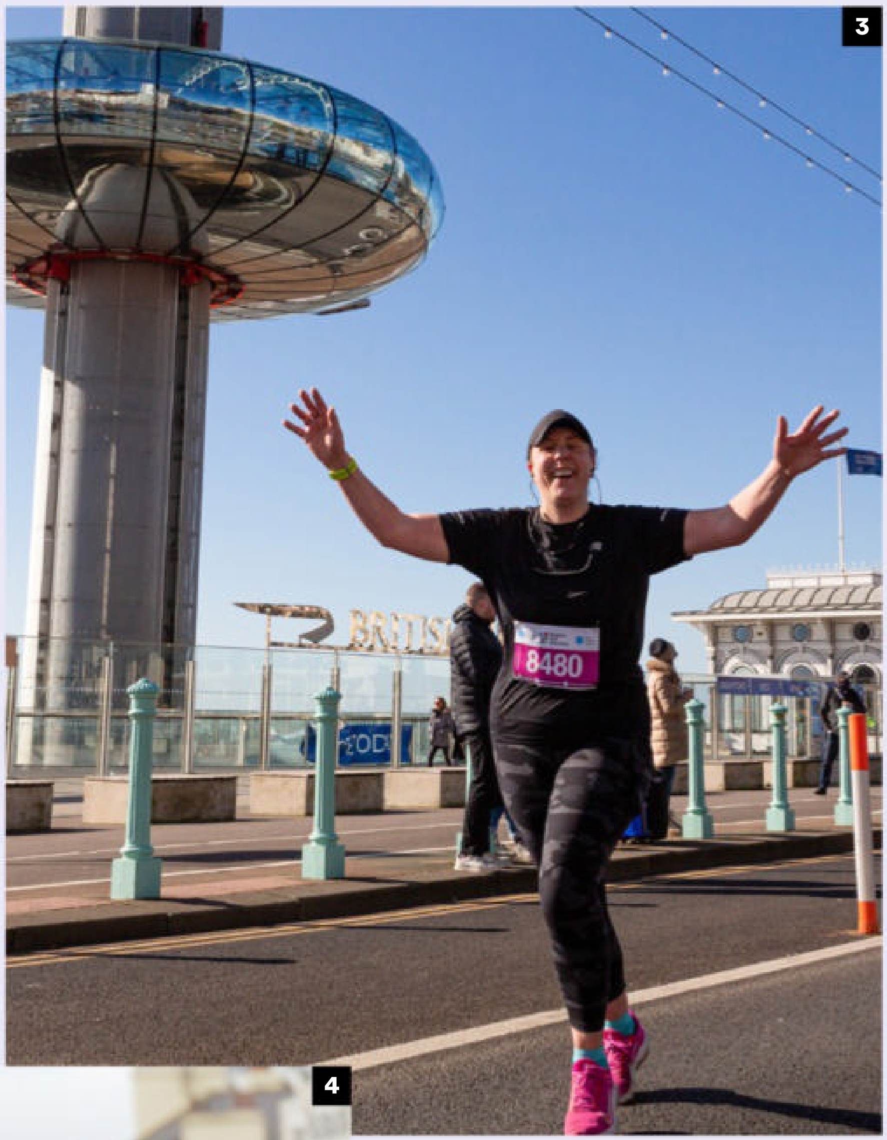
● **EYE CANDY**
A speedy city tour passing the opulent Royal Pavilion, derelict West Pier and lively Palace Pier.

● **LOUD AND PROUD**
It attracts huge crowds, with live bands and noisy cheering points.

● **BUILT FOR SPEED**
The flattish route is PB-friendly, with a straight three-mile blast for home.

1 / Runners enjoying the iconic course
2 / The finish line in February 2016
3 / Passing by the landmarks, including the British Airways i360 pictured here
4 / The race attracts 12,000 runners per year

WORDS: ADRIAN MONTI. PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK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4

WHAT'S NEW

THE YOUTH and wheelchair races are returning after a post-pandemic absence. Ongoing ways to make the event eco-friendlier continue – biodegradable cups and tins of water (in the goody bag) have already replaced plastic ones.

WHAT THEY SAY

THE RACE DIRECTOR
'Despite the race starting 33 years ago, it has always kept its original purpose of being a charity-raising event, which we're still very proud of. Although it's grown enormously, it has never become too corporate or full of itself. I think that's because many of the 450 volunteers on the day are from the local running community and have a connection with it. Being held on the date when it is, over the years the weather has on occasion been awful – strong winds are what we worry about most – but often it's a lovely early spring day with blue skies showing Brighton at its best. After Covid, we staged an October version in 2021, which was amazing, but its February slot seems to be its natural home.'
– Martin Harrigan

THE STALWART
'I made my debut in 2004, when it was a much smaller event. I led from the start and won – I was really pleased to have my name engraved on the trophy. My best year was 2007; the conditions were ideal, and I felt great. I remember the prom was very busy and I was swerving past people out for a stroll and won by nearly three minutes in 1:08:33. I went back in 2009 and won it for a third time. The 2020 event was strange as it was one of the final mass-participation events before lockdown. I've seen the event grow since my first victory and it's great to have won one of the south coast's biggest races three times.'
– James Baker

WHO KNEW?

CLOSE TO the start/finish line on Madeira Drive, runners pass a statue of local boy Steve Ovett. The original bronze statue of him stood in the city's Preston Park before it was stolen, leaving only a single foot behind on its plinth. This new statue was unveiled by Ovett himself in 2012, and from its base to the Palace Pier and back is exactly 800m, the distance he ran to win.

WAY BACK WHEN

1990: ENGLAND MEN'S football team lose on penalties to West Germany in the World Cup semi-final in Italy; *Pretty Woman* starring Julia Roberts opens in cinemas; and Margaret Thatcher's 11-year term as Prime Minister comes to an end.

The next Brighton Half Marathon takes place on 26 February. brightonhalfmarathon.com

THE START LIST

Our selection of the best, fastest, toughest, quirkiest and most enjoyable UK races this month

Key

- Road
- Trail
- Urban
- Rural
- Flat
- Hilly

Arc of Attrition and Arc 50

Coverack/Porthcurno, Cornwall, 27 and 28 January

Here are two huge events that both start on the southern coast of Cornwall and follow the seashore to arc around the peninsula, finishing near Porthtowan Beach on the northern coast. The question you have to answer is this: do you want to run along that beautiful, windswept, hilly, exposed, inspiring landscape for 100 miles, or will just the 50 miles do? Both events are open only to experienced ultrarunners who are comfortable with self-navigation and running through the night.
mudcrew.co.uk

Kirkstall Calverley Cutter

Kirkstall, Yorkshire, 28 January

Calverley Cutting was intended to be a new packhorse way between Calverley and Apperley Bridge when it was created in 1856 by simply cutting through any obstacle that had the temerity to stand in the way, including sandstone rock. Unfortunately, it didn't really work as a route because it was too steep. This trail route may have been too much for 19th-century packhorses, but you'll power through it on this 16km adventure that also follows the River Aire and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. A can of Kirkstall beer awaits finishers, and for those who've gone dry for January, what's a few days?
greatowlrunning.com

ALL RACES GOING AHEAD AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

The Half and Half

Sowerby Bridge, Yorkshire, 29 January

If you're one of those people who agonises over choosing the right shoe for every event, this race will completely remove that conundrum: there is no correct shoe. For the first half of this 10K loop, you'll need a durable road shoe for a route that inclines gently for five kilometres. Then you'll need a tough and grippy trail shoe for a wet, mucky, gentle downhill for four kilometres through wooded areas and fields. And for the final kilometre, the best equipment would be the speediest shoes you have for the rollicking downhill along the tarmac home straight. So which wrong option will you choose? In fact, put that out of your head and think about the bespoke hoodie for all finishers who register before 1 January – you're almost certainly going to need it.
runable.co.uk

Race Over The Glens 2023

Glenariff, Co. Antrim, 1 January

You'll see some of the very best views in all of Northern Ireland (and, therefore, the world) over the six-ish miles of this trail race in the Glens of Antrim – but they don't come cheap. You'll pay for them in the form of some hard work as you run along various types of trail terrain, including steep switchbacks with slippery stone steps. Other sections are quite exposed, a few meander through forested areas and others follow walkways along cascading rivers. Now that we think about it, we'd probably prefer to walk this one, to make sure we get to drink in all the gorgeous sights.
ballymenarunners.org

Canterbury 10

Canterbury, Kent, 22 January

If you're gunning for a half-marathon PB in 2023, a race like this is a great warm-up: if you can stick to your goal 13.1-mile pace for the duration of a 10-miler, then you have a great chance of doing the business on the big day. Plus, the less-common distance means PBs galore. And that's not the only thing this fine race has going for it. The route mixes flat Kent countryside with a couple of sharp hills.
canterbury10.co.uk

Marathon Paarlauf

Darlington, Durham, 22 January

Ah, Germans. They're so good at concisely summing up concepts that sound clunky in English: 'paarlauf' sounds so much nicer than 'running in pairs'. At this event in South Park in Darlington, you and a friend take turns to run one mile, completing 13 each before covering 385 yards (352m) together to run exactly a marathon between you. It sounds like a really fun and unique concept – just make sure you don't indulge in too much schadenfreude if other teams mess up.
runbritain.com

Brass Monkey Half Marathon

York, Yorkshire, 15 January

This half marathon, which is named for one of the more delightfully obscure and bizarre ways we have of saying 'it's cold', will have you warmed up in no time on a chilly January morning. The largely rural route to the south of York is about as flat as it gets, but before you start dreaming of a PB, you'd be wise to bear in mind that the surface is likely to be at least a bit frosty, if not downright icy. There is a time limit of 2:45 on this one. There's no evidence that the rack on which cannonballs were stacked on old-timey warships was called a 'brass monkey', though the story persists and it makes for a good race name. *yorkknavesmireharriers.co.uk*

Wildest Peaks Trail Run

Longshaw Estate, Derbyshire, 21 January

You can take on a 25.7km or a 10.6km trail run through woodland and over moors, both of which present a decent challenge: the longer race involves about 500m of ascent, while the shorter one comes in at around 250m. The Peak District weather can be a complicating factor at any time of the year, but particularly so in winter, so wrap up. That said, you'll also get to take in some of the most stunning scenery in the UK. *trailrunningpeaks.co.uk*

Essar Four Villages Half

Helsby, Cheshire, 15 January

The four villages in question are Helsby, Dunham-on-the-Hill, Mouldsworth and Manley, and they're all linked by quaint Cheshire country roads that will be closed to traffic for the duration of this mostly flat half marathon. This is a small, friendly no-frills race that prides itself on good organisation, and the fact that it has been running since 1982 is a testament to its enduring quality. In recent years, the organisers have been encouraging entrants to take public transport or to carpool to the race, both because of a lack of parking and also because it's the right thing to do when we're in the middle of a climate emergency. *helsbyrunningclub.org.uk*

The Riverbank Rollick

Thornbury, Gloucestershire, 15 January

We love races that aren't precisely measured and focus more on following a quality route, whatever distance it may be. The Riverbank Rollick clocks in at an unusual 15.44km – 9.6 miles – and covers a wide variety of terrain, including road, woodland and fields. Expect mud, bracing gusts of wind as you run along the River Severn and a couple of steep ascents. *thornburyrunningclub.co.uk*

Delamere Trail 13 & 10

Delamere, Cheshire, 15 January

The two great trail events taking place here, a 13-miler and a 10K, have one notable thing in common: they follow mostly undulating routes that don't look all that scary until right at the end, when both present you with a single massive hill, ascending around 100m in a little over one kilometre. The hill in question is called Old Pale Hill, and you may indeed feel old and pale when you reach the top. There's also a 1km trail run for the little ones, thankfully without any enormous hills. *lakeland100.com*

Walter Raleigh Round Half Marathon

Budleigh Salterton, Devon, 8 January

Ah, Walter Raleigh: poet, nobleman, courtier, brutal suppressor of uprisings, champion of the potato. Perhaps it would be instructive to take on this multi-terrain half with a bellyful of spuds to consider the legacy of a controversial historical figure, who spent time around here as a child. Of course, you can always just enjoy the gorgeous Jurassic Coast scenery and the tough, hilly climbs. *climbsouthwest.com*

Falkirk Epic Trail 10K

Falkirk, Stirlingshire, 15 January

There are plenty of great historical houses in Britain, and Callendar House is certainly up there among the best. Over its 600 years, it has hosted Oliver Cromwell, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Queen Victoria and other notable figures. All of this probably won't matter much to you as you run around its grounds as part of this 10K. Almost every step is either uphill or downhill, but you'll be surrounded by beautiful woodland all the way. *toughrunneruk.com*

RW POLL

If your running career ended right now, would you be content with the PBs that you have?

11%

Yes, I totally maxed out

38%

A few yes, a few no.

51%

No, I could improve them all.

Based on a Twitter poll with 226 votes

RW ONLINE RACE LISTINGS

Thirsty for more? Go to runnersworld.com/uk and click 'Events' for the UK's most comprehensive race database, where you can search over 4,500 races by location, terrain, distance and more.

WORDS: STEPHEN GLENNON. PHOTOGRAPHY: RESPICE PHOTOGRAPHY; IAN STEPHEN/PROSPORTSIMAGES; JODI HANAGAN PHOTOGRAPHY; MICK HALL PHOTOS

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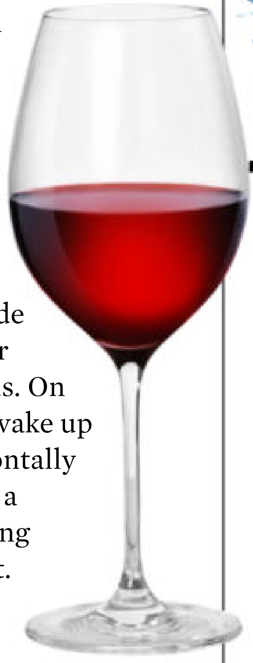
I'M A RUNNER

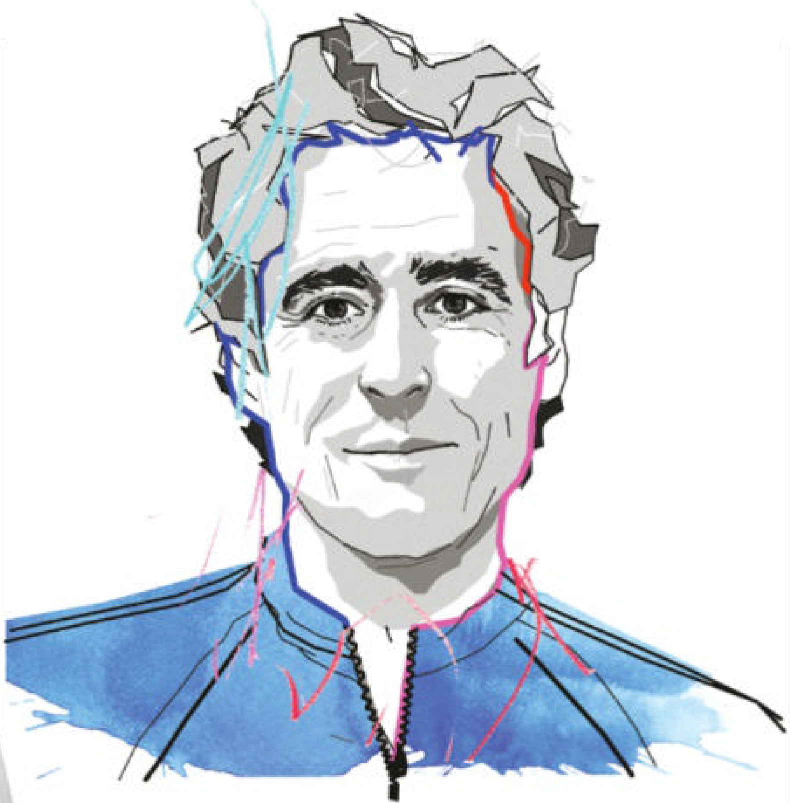
STEPHEN MANGAN

THE ACTOR, COMEDIAN AND WRITER, 54, ON RACES, RED WINE, CHAOS AND EUPHORIA

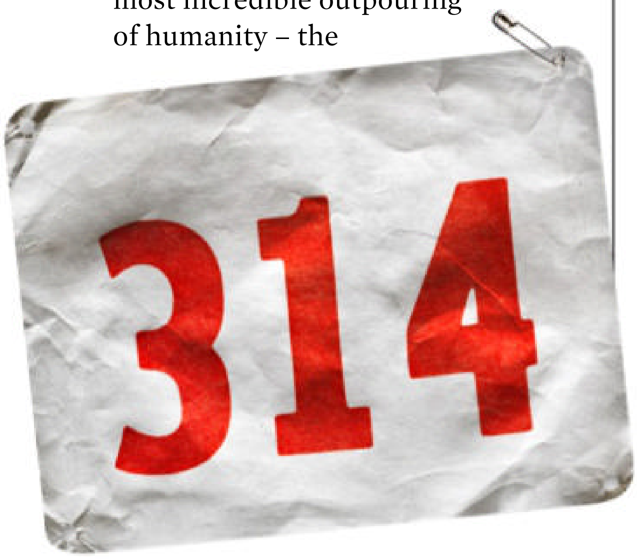
I RAN A BIT AT SCHOOL and ended up on my cross-country team. I was never particularly great, but there was something about it… the simplicity of it. I can remember those days when it all clicked and you felt superhuman – like you could fly up anything or beat anyone. Being asked to run the London Marathon got me back into running in my late twenties. Then it really got its hooks into me and when it does, you're lost, aren't you? It's just something that becomes part of who you are and what you do.



I HAVE AN ALL-OR-NOTHING PERSONALITY, so I'll either be training six times a week and really into it, or I'll fall into a vat of red wine. But I'm very goal-oriented, so I know if I need a bit of a kick up the backside in my fitness, I'll enter a race to help me focus. On those days when you wake up and it's raining horizontally and you have to make a decision, a race looming helps keep you honest.

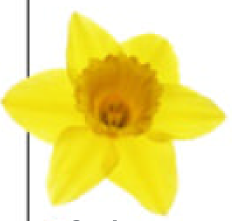


MY FIRST LONDON MARATHON WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST DAYS OF MY LIFE. You spend so long working towards it, you're so nervous. Then, on the day, there's that combination of something you achieve, coupled with that most incredible outpouring of humanity – the people lining the streets cheering you on, all the other runners helping each other out. It's really moving. How often do you get that in modern life? It genuinely brings a tear to your eye – all these people of all different shapes and sizes, all ages and all different abilities really putting themselves through it, and then tens of thousands of people cheering them on. It's a total joy.



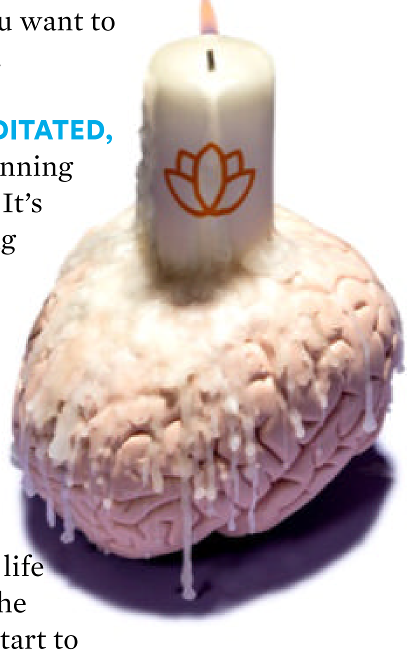
> 'I imagine running is like meditation. It's a way of blanking your mind'

BOTH MY PARENTS DIED OF CANCER and both were looked after by Marie Curie nurses in their final few days, so I know first-hand what an incredible service they provide. In that final, overwhelming moment, their nurses come to your house, so the patient can die at home rather than in a hospital, and they help to answer your questions on all the million things you don't understand. They don't get any government funding, so it was an easy decision to become an ambassador and run to raise funds for them.



● Stephen is an ambassador for Marie Curie, the charity that provides care and support through terminal illness. mariecurie.org.uk

MY DAD CAME TO WATCH ME A RUN A FEW TIMES. It's very motivating, knowing your dad will be at mile 21, so you don't want to be overtaken by someone dressed as Big Ben at that point. You want to be looking good.



I'VE NEVER MEDITATED, but I imagine running is a bit like that. It's a way of blanking your mind, stopping yourself consciously thinking about stuff. I find when I run, the things that are bothering me in life slowly filter to the surface, so you start to subconsciously pick away at them. And because most creative people are quite obsessive about what they do, that is often the film, play or TV show I'm in or trying to write. We're so bad now at finding that time when you let your brain just go where it wants to go. Running is definitely that time for me.

I LOOK AT TRAINING PLANS LONGINGLY. With work and a young family, it's very difficult to stick to them. The three-hour Sunday long run is just not an option for me. It's chaos. I just do it all when I can.

RUNNING IS SUCH A GREAT WAY TO GET TO KNOW A PLACE. When you stick on a pair of running shoes and go out for an hour or two, you truly discover somewhere, and I love that. I took my running kit to the Hay Festival and the morning after I did my talk, I ran up a big old hill. As I was running along the top, this wave of euphoria hit me. I felt unbeatable. It doesn't last long, but for those few moments, it's just incredible, and I think that's what keeps you coming back, isn't it?

INTERVIEW: BEN HOBSON; RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: STUDIO 33; GETTY IMAGES

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